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ACROSS AUSTRALIA

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CHAPTER X

SACRED CEREMONIES OF THE ARUNTA TRIBE

Of far greater interest than the ordinary corrobborees, which may be taken part in by men, women and even children, are the sacred or secret ceremonies that are called "quabara undattha." These may only be seen and taken part in by fully-initiated men. No women or children are allowed anywhere near to the ceremonial ground while they are being prepared and performed.

We have already described how the tribe is divided into a large number of local groups, each of which is supposed to be especially associated with some material object which is spoken of as the totem of every individual member of that group. The first thing that strikes one about these groups is their local character. For example, Alice Springs is the centre of a witchetty grub group, though at the same time other totems are represented amongst the natives living there. The sacred ceremonies, or at least a very large number of them, are associated with what we should call the mythical ancestors of these local groups, though it must be remembered that, to the natives, they are very real and by no means mythical; in fact, living amongst them at the present time are individuals who are supposed to be the reincarnations of certain of these old-time ancestors whose names even they bear. In their secret storehouses they carefully

cherish the wooden or stone bull-roarers which these ancestors are supposed to have carried about with them in the Alcheringa, or dream times, when they wandered across the country. The very existence of these sacred objects is quite sufficient proof to the Arunta savage of the former existence of their owners.

Every local group has its head man or Alatunja who has charge of the storehouse and without whose permission no one may remove anything from it. In this instance, that is at Alice Springs, it has the form of a cleft in the steep rock side of a picturesque gorge, called Unthurqua by the natives and Emily Gap by the whites, a few miles to the south-east of Alice Springs (Fig. 106). It contains a number of stone and wooden Churinga of the usual shape, some of them so old that the pattern which was long ago incised upon them has been obliterated by constant rubbing; for every now and then, when sacred ceremonies are being enacted, some of the Churinga will be brought on to the ceremonial ground and reverently rubbed with grease and red ochre while the older men tell the younger ones the names and deeds of those to whom they once belonged (Fig. 107). Each ceremony is supposed to represent some episode in the life of an ancestor and, endless as these ceremonies are, they are matters of deep importance to the natives. In the Arunta tribe each Churinga and ceremony also is the property of some individual who has received it by inheritance from his father or his father's brother. No woman at the present day is supposed actually to own any Churinga, though there are some of them which according to tradition were carried about by celebrated women of the Alcheringa, when women were allowed to see and own such things. Some of the women now alive are the reincarnations of these old Alcheringa people; but only the older men

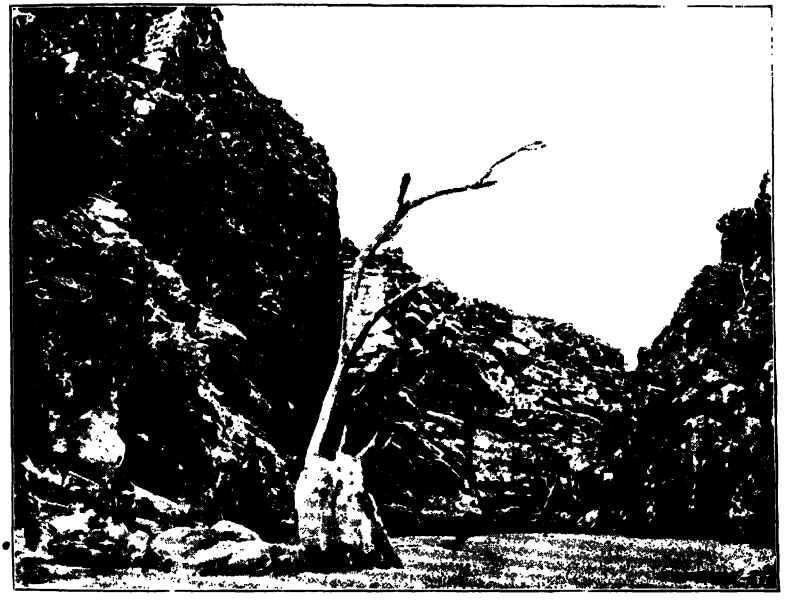


Fig. 106. EMILY GAP FROM THE NORTH SIDE.

The block of stone in the foreground is the *Nanja* rock of Intwailiuka, the leader of the Witchetty grubs.

know this. The owner of the sacred Churinga is the only person who has the right to perform any ceremony associated with it, though he will, at times, invite a friend to do so, if he wishes to pay him a compliment or to receive some favour from him. Everything of course is strictly regulated by custom and precedent. For example, while a ceremony that belongs to the Panunga and Bulthara moiety of the tribe is being prepared, only members of these two classes may be present and assist, except on very rare occasions when it is desired to show special honour to some leading man of the other moiety.

Of the two words "quabara undattha," the former, which means a sacred ceremony, is very suggestive of the word of which corrobboree is evidently the anglicised form in the eastern side of the continent, but in the Arunta the equivalent of the latter word is "altherta." "Undattha" means birds' down and indicates the fact that this is the material used for decorating, just as grass-seed down is in the ordinary corrobboree. It is only extremely rarely, as in the case of the closing scene of the Tjitjingalla, that women and children are allowed to see it, and then only under the cover of, at least, semi-darkness, and the great excitement which the scene caused showed clearly that it was an unusual occurrence.

At times large numbers of the natives from various parts will gather together to perform a series of these ceremonies. This is done on the initiative of some important Alatunja, who sends out a messenger with one of the sacred Churinga. A Churinga, when used for this special purpose, is called Ilchinkinja, a word compounded of "ilcha," a hand, and "inkinja," to lift up; that is, for the time being, it represents a lifted hand, and the real significance of the word may be best indicated by the term "the

beckoning hand." The messenger, who is perfectly safe so long as he carries the sacred emblem, travels on from group to group, showing the Churinga as evidence of his mission and at the same time delivers his message. The Ilchinkinja bears a summons which no native, in the normal condition of the tribe, would dare to disobey. He imagines that if he should venture to disregard the summons thus received he would be sure to suffer some evil. The spirit of the old ancestor, who once carried the Churinga about with him, is still closely associated with it and powerful also to work evil magic against him if he neglects the call.

At the time agreed upon—perhaps so many moons after the receipt of the message—the different parties wend their way to the meeting place.

A very good example of one of these gatherings is afforded by the Engwura ceremony which we watched at Alice Springs during the summer at the close of 1896. It began in the middle of September and was not concluded till the middle of the succeeding January. We could not find out the precise meaning of the term Engwura, further than that it is the name for the long series of ceremonies ; but it is compounded in part of the word " ura," which means fire, and indicates the fact that certain fire ceremonies form an important part of the series. When a man has passed through these fire ordeals he arrives at the status called " urliara " ; that is, he is regarded as a fully-initiated man, entitled not only to take part in all the various ceremonies of the tribe, but also to take charge of younger men who are passing through the same—a status of some importance, as these younger men are to some extent under his control, and must amongst other things provide him with certain food. The natives say that the Engwura ceremony has the



Fig. 107. GROUP OF MEN EXAMINING THE CHURINGA (p. 256).

power of strengthening all who pass through it. It imparts courage and wisdom, makes the men more kindly disposed and less quarrelsome—it is certainly regarded as a means of wiping out all quarrels up to date—it transforms them indeed into "ertwa murra oknira," words which respectively mean, man, good, very or great. We have translated the word "murra" by our English term good, but of course this must be taken in the native sense of the word, which is not always identical with our own.

It is, naturally, only under favourable conditions that so long a series of ceremonies can be performed at one spot, because during its continuance the men are so busily engaged that they have but little time to scatter over the country in search of food. The women and children go out daily in quest of munyeru (the seeds of one of the succulent plants, most usually *Claytonia balonnensis*) and various forms of grass seed. Bulbs of Irriakurra and acacia seed are also brought into camp in large quantities to swell the food supply.

The spot chosen for the Engwura ground was so secluded that nothing which was taking place on it could be seen from the main camp where the women and children were living. To the casual stranger, everything might appear to be the result of chance, except the choice of the exact position of the ceremonial ground; but in reality, everything was the result of long established custom. In the first place a considerable amount of etiquette is, as we have already described, associated with the arrival of any strange party, and to ceremonies such as these none but invited guests come. The members approach to within a short distance, but not in sight of the ground. They sit down in silence, the local people, though of course they are well aware of the presence of strangers, taking no notice of them whatever, in a way

which, to the white man, seems eminently pointed and discourteous; indeed it looks as if the hosts were trying to show their indifference to the guests. After a time one or two of the older men go to the strangers. Some-

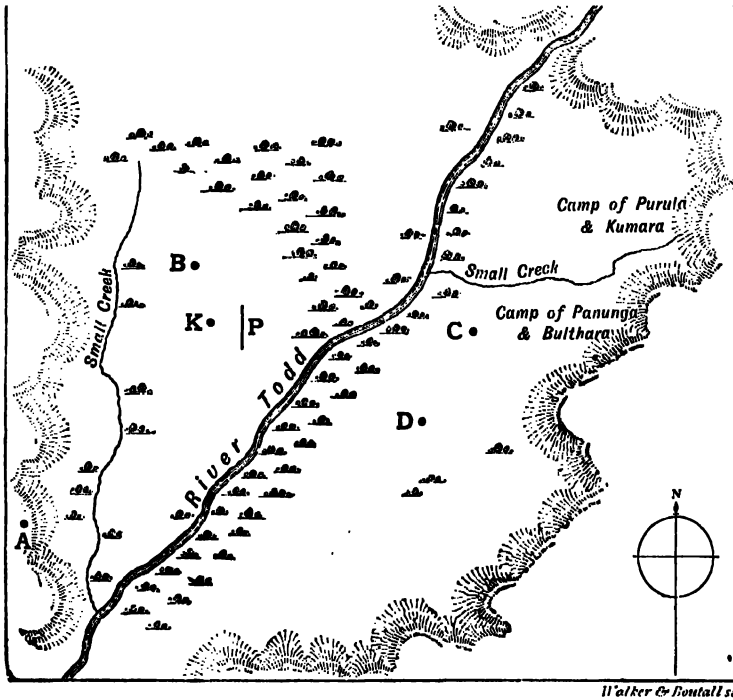


FIG. 108.—PLAN OF THE ENGWURA GROUND.

A, storing place of Churinga of the Panunga and Bulthara; B, storing place of Churinga of the Purula and Kumara; C, spot where the Panunga and Bulthara women stood when throwing fire over the *Illpongwurra*; D, spot where the Paula and Kumara women stood when throwing fire over the *Illpongwurra*; P, the position of the *Parra* mound; K, the position of the *Kauaua*.

times they embrace the leaders, and after a short conversation they invite them to come into camp, making them as it were free of their country. The men of the visiting party go to the ceremonial ground, the women to the main camp.

The annexed plan of the Engwura ground (Fig. 108) will

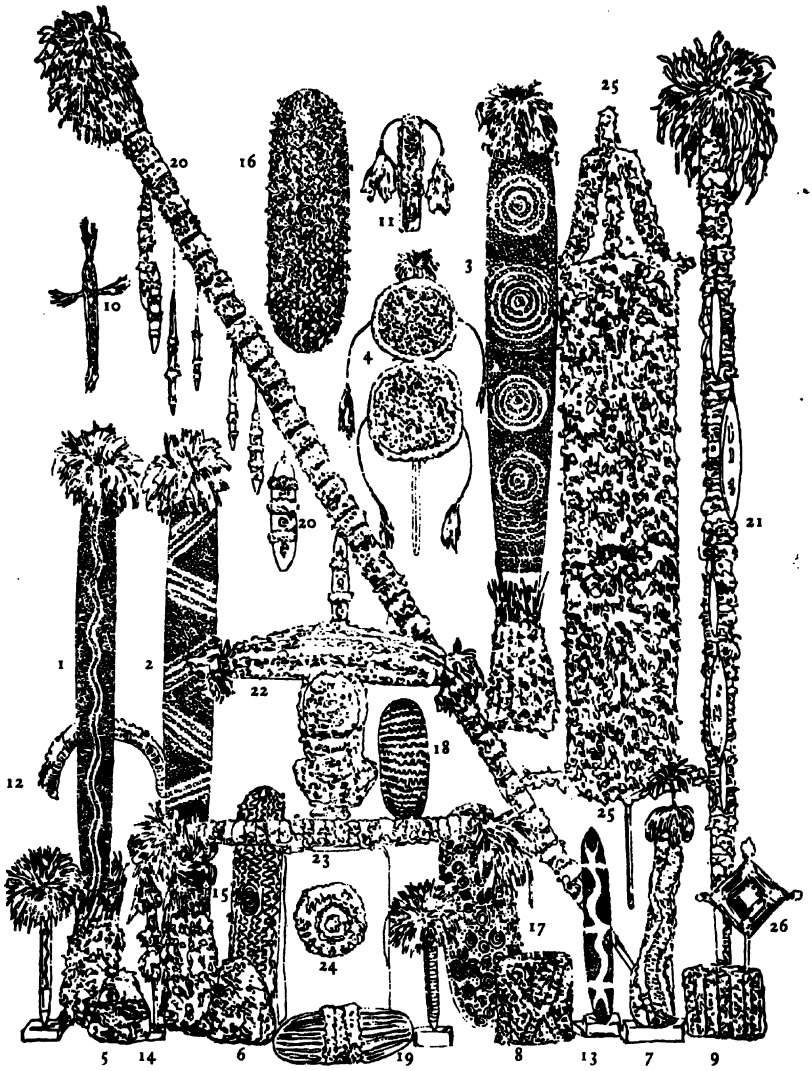


PLATE VI.—CEREMONIAL OBJECTS.

1, 2, 3. Ceremonial tablets used during the performance of a rain ceremony. Arunta tribe.

4. Object worn in the head-dress of a man performing a ceremony of the yam totem. Tjingilli tribe.

5, 6, Two head-dresses worn during the performance of a Tjudia (deaf adder) totemic ceremony. Warramunga tribe.

7. Head-dress worn during the performance of a ceremony of the wind totem. Warramunga tribe.

8, 9. Head-dress worn during totemic ceremonies. Anula tribe.

10. Object representing a white cockatoo, worn during a totemic ceremony. Tjingilli.

11. Object representing a white cockatoo, carried by the headman of the totem

12. Object representing the limp body of a dead kangaroo, worn on the head-dress during a kangaroo ceremony. Arunta tribe.

13. Wooden slab worn on the head during the performance of a ceremony of the snake totem. Anula tribe.

14. Black cockatoo tail feathers ornamented with down, worn on the head during the performance of a rain ceremony. Arunta tribe.

15, 16, 17, 18. Decorated shields used during the performance of ceremonies connected with the witchetty grub totem. Arunta tribe.

19. Shield used during the performance of a rain ceremony. Arunta tribe.

20. Nurtunja used during the performance of an achilpa ("wild-cat") totemic ceremony. with Churinga attached.

of a kangaroo ceremony, with Churinga attached.

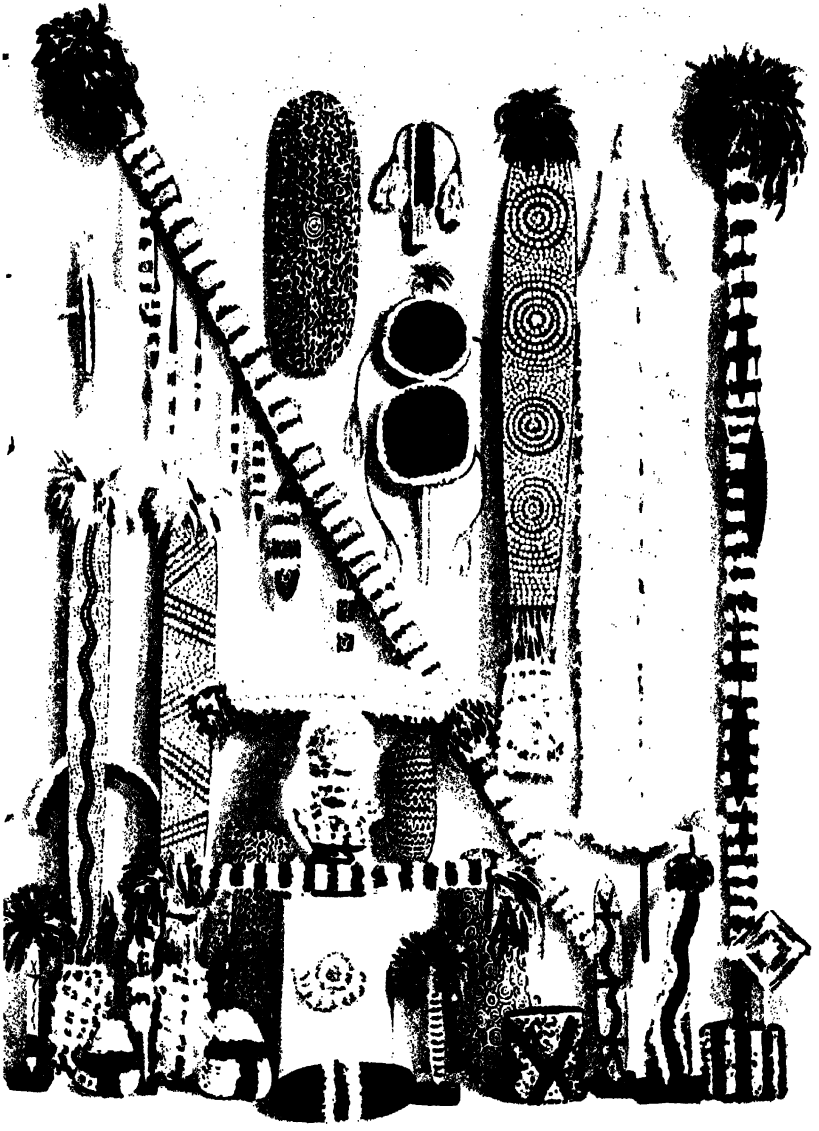
22. Small nurtunja worn on the head during the performance of a plum-tree totemic ceremony. Arunta tribe.

23. Small nurtunja worn on the head during the performance of a Hakea plant totemic ceremony. Arunta tribe.

24. Object representing the sun, carried during the performance of a sun totemic ceremony. Arunta tribe.

25. Waninga used during the performance of a kangaroo totemic ceremony. Arunta tribe.

26. Small waninga worn in the head-dress during the performance of a kangaroo totemic ceremony. Arunta tribe.



give a good idea of the arrangements which are made in connection with such an important ceremony as the Engwura. It occupied a flat stretch bounded by rough quartzite hills of no great height. The Todd River entered it at its northern end and, running slantwise across for about a mile, passed out of it southwards by another gorge. The lonely telegraph station lay by the side of the northern gorge, but was completely concealed by belts of scrub from view of the actual ceremonial ground, which lay at the south end of the flat, so that the performances could be conducted in perfect secrecy. Further still, the banks of the Todd were lined by shrubs and trees which served to screen the ceremonial ground on its western side from the main camp, which was placed on a small flat on its eastern side. Across this flat a small creek ran, but as of course it contained no water and was little more than a runnel, it formed a symbolic, rather than an effectual, line of division between a northern and a southern part of the camp. It served however to mark a primary division of the tribe, for to the north of it the Purula and Kumara moiety, and to the south the Panunga and Bulthara camped. It was also noticeable that the former, from choice, camped on the flat, the latter on the rising ground —a feature of very considerable interest and one which we noted whenever the camping ground lent itself to this arrangement. What its significance may be we do not know. Those who believe in the ancient fusion of two originally hostile groups or tribes, or whatever they may be designated, to form the two exogamic moieties that now characterise the organisation of Australian communities in general, will doubtless find in this a further support for their theory; be this as it may, and at best it must remain in the nature of a guess, this curious feature served to bring into still more prominent relief

the existence, and the marked separation, of the two primary moieties in the tribe. Within the camp there was a still further division of the mia-mias. Those belonging to men from the south camped at the southern end of their part, those from the north at the northern, and so on through the various localities. That is, in such a camp as this, there is a primary division of the moieties, and then within these a secondary division based on locality.

Each local group brought with it a number of its sacred bull-roarers or Churinga, and on the ceremonial ground those belonging to the Panunga and Bulthara were stored on a little platform in a mulga tree on a hill-side at the south end of the ground. Those of the Kumara and Purula were on the Engwura ground itself, that is, on the flat (Fig. 109). The former was under the charge of a Bulthara and the latter under that of a Purula man, and without their consent no Churinga could be removed from its store place, which for the time being was sacred ground. On one occasion a few of the younger men began to quarrel near the storing-place of the Purula man, but he at once sternly ordered them away, as no fighting or quarrelling might take place anywhere near the sacred Churinga.

Everything in native camps is ruled by custom, and on this occasion the proceedings were under the control of one special old man who, apparently without any trouble or the slightest hitch, governed the whole camp comprising more than one hundred full grown men, apart from women and children, who were taking part in the ceremony. The final decision on all points lay in his hands, but there was what we used to call the "cabinet," consisting of this old man and three of the elder men who often met to discuss matters. It was very interesting to watch the proceedings. The old leader would get up from the men amongst whom he was sitting, and



Fig. 109. OLD MEN IN CHARGE OF THE STORE OF CHURINGA BELONGING TO THE PURULA AND KUMARA, DURING THE ENGWURA CEREMONY. THE CHURINGA ARE STORED ON A PLATFORM CALLED THANUNDA.



Fig. 110. GROUP OF OLD MEN WHO ACTED AS LEADERS AND TOOK CHARGE OF THE YOUNGER MEN DURING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ENGWURA.

without a word being spoken, the other three would rise and follow him as he walked away to a secluded spot, where they very leisurely and gravely discussed matters of procedure. When the cabinet meeting was over the leader gave his orders and everything proceeded with perfect smoothness. The younger men had no say in the matter, and the natural effect upon them was to heighten their respect for the old men; more especially as, on an occasion such as this, they realise that in course of time it will come to their turn to be leaders and to be respected and looked up to by the younger men, just as they themselves now looked up to and respected the older men (Fig. 110).

The Engwura began with one of the ordinary corroborees called Atnimokitta (Fig. 111), which occupied ten evenings. Every important ceremony, in which visitors from distant localities take part, is ushered in by one of these ordinary dances, which, amongst other things, serve the purpose of filling up the time between the arrival of the various contingents, who are thus likely to be all present when the serious proceedings begin. On this occasion the head man of the Alice Springs group, after consultation with the older men, decided that the Atnimokitta should be given as a mark of respect to the man who was in charge of the Engwura and belonged to a more southern locality, a place called Imanda on the Hugh River.

Then the real part of the ceremony began in earnest. This consisted in the performance of a long series of totemic ceremonies. Unfortunately we did not keep a quite complete list of these, but for three months never a day passed without one of them and sometimes there were as many as six during the twenty-four hours. Each was associated with some particular totem and spot (Figs. 112–116).

Thus, for example, one ceremony was called Quabara Irriakura of Umbanjun—that is, a ceremony of the Irriakura (an edible bulb) totem of a place called Umbanjun; another was a ceremony of the Udniringita of Unthurqua—that is, a ceremony of the witchetty grub totem of Emily Gap near Alice Springs. A few also were associated with mischievous spirits, called Oruncha (Fig. 119). Each ceremony, further, was associated with some old totemic ancestor who was specially connected with the given locality. Every ceremony was also regarded as the property of some individual who had received it by inheritance, usually from his father but sometimes from his father's brother, if the latter had no actual son. The possession of ceremonies such as these is a source of profit as well as pleasure to the older men.

Many of the customs of these savages display a good deal of organising ability and forethought. Unless, for example, some special scheme were devised, the commissariat of a large party of individuals such as that which met to perform the Engwura would present very great difficulties. In the first place, as we have already said, such a gathering can only be held at a favourable place and time. Food and water must be abundant. The Macdonnell Ranges are well adapted for the purpose. Water, if it be a good season, is abundant, and so are plants and animals. The supply of grass seed, which is perhaps the most valuable single food, is practically inexhaustible; bulbs and seeds are easily obtained and in many places the succulent Claytonia, a kind of pig-face, grows luxuriantly. On the broad plains amongst the Ranges large kangaroos and emus can be caught, and smaller wallabies amongst the rocks. Snakes and lizards are easily procured, and though, as time goes by, the near country is depleted, this only means that the providers of



Fig. 111. ATNIMOKITTA CORROBBOREE (p. 263).



Fig. 112. CEREMONY OF THE IRRIAKURA TOTEM OF UMBANJUM. The decorated feathers on the head represent the flowering Irriakura.



Fig. 113. CEREMONY OF THE IRRIAKURA TOTEM OF OKNIRCHUMPATANA. The performer sits in front of a series of tufts of feathers fixed in the ground.



Fig. 114. OLD MEN EXPLAINING TOTEMIC MATTERS TO A YOUNG MAN AT THE CLOSE OF A TOTEMIC CEREMONY.

At the same time a decorated shield used during the ceremony is pressed against his stomach.

food must go further afield. It must always be remembered that important ceremonies are only conducted under these favourable conditions.

In addition, one of the most striking features of any such ceremony as the Engwura, when older men are showing younger ones anything of a sacred or secret nature, is that, in the first place, the younger men are supposed to be very abstemious and self-denying in the matter of food, especially meat. Further still, every older man has a few of the younger ones immediately under his charge. He is what is called their Abmoara, and every day a party of these young men is taken out into the bush under the charge of one or two old men for the express purpose of hunting for food, which they must hand over to their elders. Sometimes these parties will be out for two or three days, with most beneficial results so far as the old men are concerned. There may be occasions when, in a secluded spot in some deep ravine, out of sight of the old men, a fire is lighted and one or two of the younger men, who must often be really hungry and exhausted also by loss of blood, make a surreptitious meal off some bird or wallaby which ought to have gone to feed an older man. It is not however likely that this takes place very often. For one thing, the fear of evil magic which would follow the breaking of any tribal custom has a very strong hold on the native mind; and, for another, the old men are very keen of observation and would soon detect anything like a serious discrepancy between the actual and what they think should be the proper supply. The whole arrangement is a most ingenious one, from the point of view of the old men, because they are provided with food and at the same time the three or four young men who hunt for them are themselves prohibited from eating much under the penalty of suffering from evil magic.

In regard to the performance of ceremonies there was no set or order of any kind, and we never knew from hour to hour what was going to be done. The ceremonial ground was arranged on a very definite plan. On its eastern side there was a curious mound of earth called Parra running north and south, about thirty feet in length, two in width and one in height. It was ornamented with small gum-tree boughs, fixed upright along its length. Beyond the fact that it was supposed to represent a tract of country, and ran north and south because, in the Alcheringa, the people of the wild cat totem travelled in this direction, we tried in vain to find out what it signified. A little distance from this, nearer to the north end of the ground, was a small platform on which the Churinga of the Purula and Kumara people were stored. It was made of four upright posts with boughs on the top, forming a kind of table on which the Churinga were laid, hidden from view by a thick layer of leafy twigs. The Churinga of the Panunga and Bulthara were stored on a platform in a mulga tree on a hill right at the south end.

Close to the Kumara and Purula store a little wurley, or bush shelter, was built for us, and in this we spent our days, and often our nights also, during the progress of the Engwura. It was enclosed on three sides, the southern being open so that we commanded a general view of the Parra and ceremonial ground, over which we wandered quite unheeded by the natives.

We may say here that one of us had been for long recognised by the natives as a member of the Alice Springs group of witchetty grubs, to which totem, as his younger tribal brother, the other of us was also regarded as belonging. The latter was only one of the common order, but the former was supposed to be the re-incarnation



Fig. 115. CEREMONY OF UDNIRINGITA (A GRUB) TOTEM, ARUNTA TRIBE (p. 264).



Fig. 116. GROUP OF MEN DISCUSSING MATTERS AT THE CLOSE OF A CEREMONY OF THE UDNIRINGITA TOTEM, ARUNTA TRIBE (p. 264).

of one of the celebrated Alcheringa men whose name was Urangara. Every individual, or at least very many members of the community, have what may be called common, everyday names, somewhat akin to nicknames amongst ourselves. One of us for example, was known as "atnitta," in reference to a somewhat relatively generous proportion of size in the region below the waist; by way of contrast, the other was known as "atnitta kupitcha," the second word meaning small. We endeavoured by means of sketches to give them some idea of the personal features and relative sizes of our friends Dr. Howitt and Dr. Fison whom we described as great Oknir-abata, men of immense weight amongst the tribes of the south-east, to whom we had to report all that we found out; whose knowledge was profound; who could send out Churinga and make boys into men, and would at once know if what we told them about the Arunta men was "crooked" and not "straight." After consideration the old men came to the conclusion, exactly why we could not find out, that Howitt was a great Echunpa (lizard) man and Fison a great Achilpa (wild cat) man. Inasmuch as it took one sheet of foolscap to represent Howitt and two to represent Fison, in their proportionate sizes, the latter was known as "atnitta oknirra" the second word signifying great or very large.

Many were the talks that we had with the old men, sheltered in our wurley from the scorching rays of the summer sun, they squatting on the ground, we sitting on the edge of our rough bunks made out of posts and sacking. Even now when handling, two thousand miles away, a well-greased and red-ochred native weapon or head ring, its peculiar scent carries us back to our old wurley on the Engwura ground. Every race of human beings has, apparently, a special odour of its own;

certainly the Australian savage has, and there were times when it was rather strong on the Engwura ground and in our wurley. It was strongest, as we often noticed, when the men got excited, either during the performance of ceremonies or when they were telling us of the deeds of their mythic ancestors. We often noticed it growing stronger and stronger as the men got more and more excited.

Skirting the base of the hill which formed the western margin of the ground there was a small meandering creek. The twistings of its dry bed were useful in providing places where different groups of men could prepare ceremonies unseen by one another.

These sacred ceremonies differ very much from the ordinary corrobborees. In the first place the decorating material used is always birds' down (Figs. 117, 118). Every man seems to have a stock of this. If they are fortunate enough to kill such a bird as an eagle-hawk they secure a good supply. It is usual to take the bird's crop out and stuff it full of down; and it is amazing what a quantity can be compressed into this small space. Another feature of importance is the small number of individuals who take part in any one performance. Usually it is only one or two, and the greatest number we ever saw, amongst the Arunta, was seven, and in this instance there were really four separate parts of the ceremony, acted at spots twenty or thirty yards away from one another.

The men who perform the ceremonies are, for the time being, supposed to represent the ancestors and to behave as they did and be decorated as they were in the Alcheringa. The whole thing is purely symbolic, and the ancestor is rarely represented as doing anything more interesting than looking around, wriggling his body about

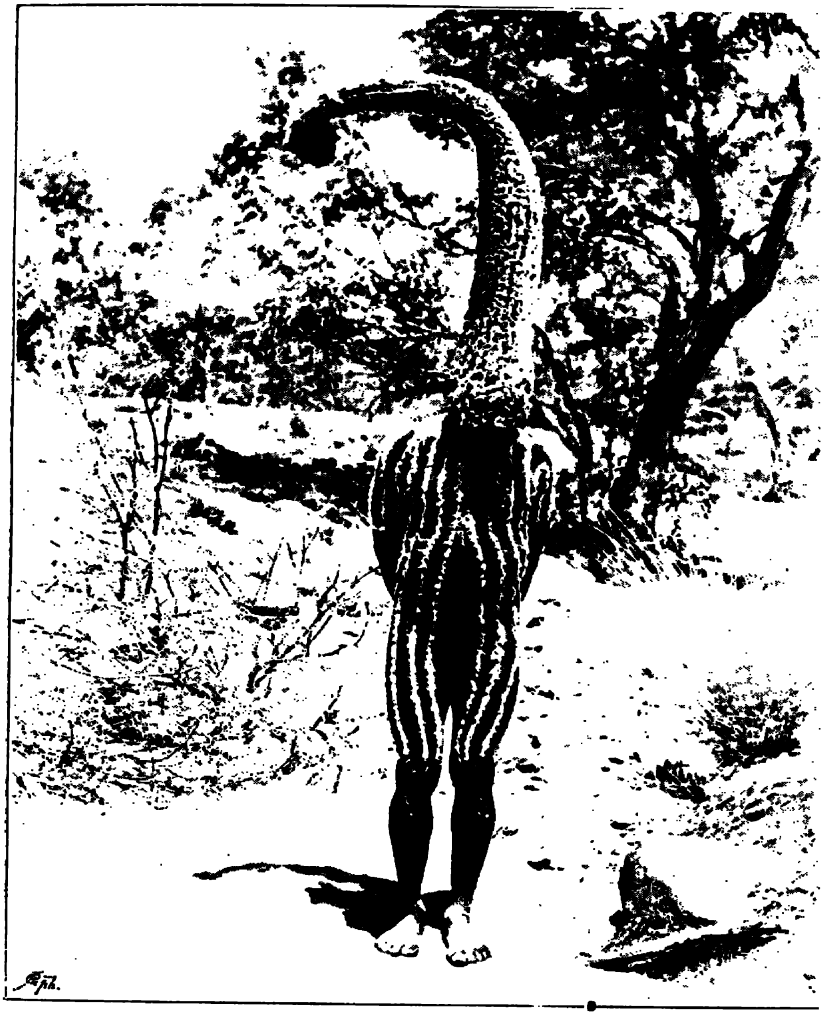


Fig. 117. CEREMONY OF THE EMU TOTEM
The head-dress represents the neck and head of an emu.

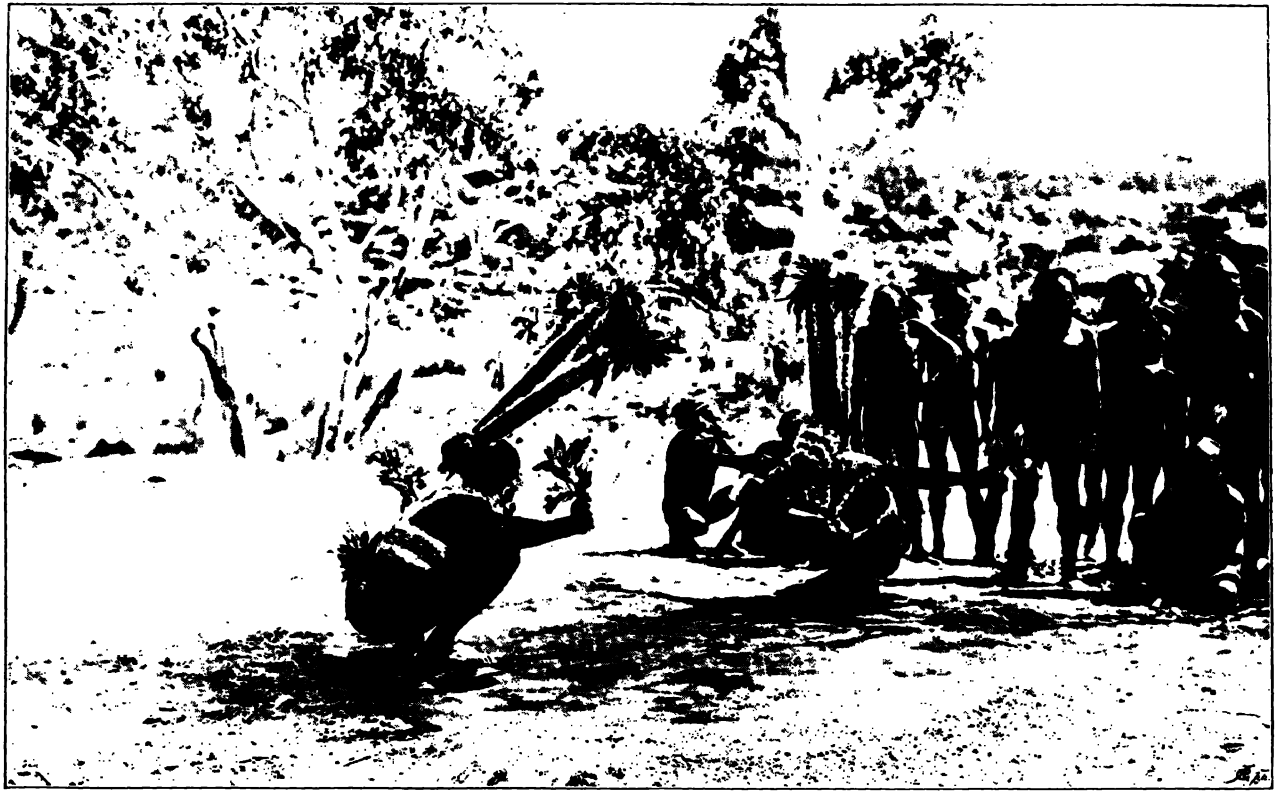


Fig. 118. CEREMONY OF THE EAGLE-HAWK TOTEM.

in an extraordinary way, or perhaps eating something—as often as not the totemic animal or plant after which he is named and out of which he is supposed to have been evolved. The importance and interest of these ceremonies lie in the fact that they constitute, amongst savages who are far below the grade of having acquired even the simplest form of written language, a record, or at least a supposed one, of the past history of the race as represented in the doings of its ancestors.

The preparations for each ceremony occupied anything from two to five or even six hours. After the old leader had determined the particular ceremony to be enacted, the performers retired to a secluded and also shady spot in the bed of the small creek, for the weather, as it was well on into summer, was very hot. They were always accompanied by a few other men, all of them, as a general rule, belonging to the same half of the tribe and frequently also to the same locality, though this was not by any means always the case. With the utmost deliberation each man opened his little package of belongings. The contents were always very simple—birds' down, red and yellow ochre, with perhaps a lump of gypsum and in some cases of wad, a manganese ore used for rubbing on the skin so as to produce a pearl-grey colour.

The preparations for a performance by a Bulthara or a Panungo man were always made at a spot in the southern half of the creek, and those for one by a Kumara or Purula man in the northern half; that is, each party was near its own store of Churinga.

It would be tedious to attempt anything more than the merest outline of the sacred ceremonies of the Engwura. We never knew what was coming next, and were obliged to be constantly on the watch. Fortunately we had the free run of the camp and of course were careful never to

interfere in any way, so that things went on in the normal manner, just as if we were not there.

The preparation included, in the first instance, the decoration of the performers themselves; and in different ceremonies this varied in amount and elaborateness to a considerable extent. Then almost every ceremony required the use of Churinga, and many also the use of special objects called Nurtunjas and Waningas. It will perhaps be best to select a few out of the very large number that we saw enacted as representative of the more important variations in decoration, manner of performance and objects used. The ordinary corrobborees are always held after dark, but these sacred ceremonies are performed at any time, a very favourite hour being just about sunset. Often, when anxious to get a photographic record, we used to chafe at the irritatingly deliberate way in which the decorating was carried out, but of course the whole thing had to be done as it had been from time immemorial by their ancestors. Fortunately a considerable number were performed in daylight; in fact there were four favourite times, viz., about noon, about sunset, from ten to eleven at night or even about midnight, and just at daybreak. Sometimes during one whole day they would be performed at all these times, though it must be understood that there were no such thing as fixed hours and those given are only very approximate. If you ask a native what time anything took place or is going to take place, his answer will take the form of pointing to the position which the sun occupied, or will occupy, in the sky at that particular time. In the simplest performances, such as that represented in Fig. 120, there was only one performer. In this instance he represented a man of the plum-tree totem, a celebrated ancestor named Kukaitcha, and there were certain parts of the ceremony,



Fig. 119. AN ORUNCHA CEREMONY (p. 264).
The performers coming on to the ground.



Fig. 120. CEREMONY OF THE PLUM-TREE TOTEM.
The performer is supposed to be eating plums.

especially during the preparation, which lent special interest to it. It belonged to the head man or Alatunja of the Alice Springs group, and he invited one of the younger men who was a tribal son of his own to perform it. The old man was a Bulthara, his tribal son being therefore a Panunga. The materials were opened out and, while the red ochre was powdered and mixed with down, the singing began. It merely consisted in a constant repetition of the words "the sand-hills are good." When all was ready the Alatunja's eldest son went over to where the selected performer sat, rubbed his forehead against his younger brother's stomach and then embraced him. This over, the latter was embraced by one of the older Bulthara men, who also stood to him in the relationship of tribal father. The meaning of all this was that it was the right and proper thing for him, a young man, at first modestly to decline the honour of performing. When he has been thus embraced no choice is left him, and he must no longer refuse. The young man's actual father opened a vein so as to secure the necessary gum, and by means of twigs and stalks, bound round and round with human hair string, the Alatunja began to make a remarkable head-dress which was supposed to represent the top-knot of the ancestor Kukaitcha. While it and the upper part of the man's body were being decorated with alternate bands of red and white down, the men sat around singing of the top-knot of the ancestor :—

Yai yai Kukai
Ul lal arai
Yai yai Kukai
Yai yai Alcheri
Mal arai.

It was just sunset when the performer came on to the ceremonial ground, and at the same time the arrival of a

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fresh contingent of visitors from the south was announced. They had, in accordance with etiquette, remained seated in silence on the opposite bank of the river, not venturing on to the ground until they were invited. To welcome them a party of the home camp, armed with spears, shields and boomerangs, ran across to where they sat, and yelling at the top of their voices, danced with their peculiar high knee-action round and round them. To anyone unacquainted with the ways of the natives it looked much more like a savage threat to exterminate the visitors, root and branch, than a hearty welcome to a strange camp and country. However, every one knew what was meant, and suddenly the welcoming party turned, crossed the river and came running up the bank. Without stopping they threw their weapons amongst the bushes and ran circling round and round the performer shouting loudly "Wah! Wah!" (Fig. 121). The performer, who was squatting on the ground with his legs folded under him in the usual attitude adopted during these ceremonies, jumped about slightly from side to side and quivered and wriggled his body in a remarkable manner. The whole performance only occupied three minutes; to indicate its close two men went and sat, one in front of and one behind the performer, a third bent over him, and the three then placed their hands on his shoulders, when he ceased wriggling (Fig. 122). After a pause for breath he got up and embraced the older men one after the other (Fig. 123). This little bit of after-play is always enacted by the Arunta. It is called "atnitta (stomach) ulpaillima (to soften)," and its meaning is that the old men become so excited when they see the ceremony which represents the old ancestor, that their insides get all tied up in knots, which can only be softened and undone by magic which passes into them either from the body of the performer, who for the time



Fig. 121. DANCE OF THE MEN ROUND THE PERFORMERS OF A CEREMONY.
This running round is called Wahkutnima.



Fig. 122. CEREMONY OF THE WILD CAT TOTEM.
Showing the laying on of hands to cause the performers to stop.



Fig. 123. PERFORMANCE OF A SACRED CEREMONY OF THE SUN TOTEM, ARUNTA TRIBE.

being represents the ancestor, or from some sacred object such as the head-dress. In many ceremonies it is customary to press such an object against the stomachs of the old men (Fig. 124).

Another ceremony, which was decidedly striking on account of its really extraordinary decorations, was associated with a frog totem. Though only one man performed, yet his decorations were so elaborate that their preparation occupied between five and six hours. The ceremony belonged to the leader of the Engwura, and he himself acted as performer. It was evidently considered a very important one, because during the preparations, though they really only differed from others in being more elaborate, all of the younger men were ordered off the ceremonial ground and spent the greater part of the day in the bed of the Todd River, under the charge of the head man of Alice Springs. This was probably done to imbue them with a proper sense of the old man's power and importance.

With the aid of twigs and grass stalks bound round and round by endless yards of human hair string, a large almost bun-shaped helmet was built up on the performer's head as he sat on the ground. Then it was decorated with alternate circles of pink and white down. The whole of his face was covered with down, and a mass of pink and white spots; each of them encircled by white, completely hid every part of his skin from view, back and front, as far down as his waist. Passing across his thigh was a series of white bands. Whilst some of the older men were busy decorating the performer, one or two others were preparing a large wooden Churinga of the frog totem, five feet in length, with rings of red and white down. Its free end was tipped with a bunch of owl feathers. Others again were preparing eight sticks,

each two feet long with a tuft of black eagle-hawk feathers tied to one end. When these were ready, they took about twenty strands of opossum-fur string, each about two feet long, covered them all over with pink and white down and tied tufts of the tail tips of the rabbit bandicoot to one end of each. When the decorations were nearly all ready, a shallow pit was scooped out of the sand, simply because the surface was too hot to sit on with comfort, and in this the performer squatted as he is seen in the illustrations (Figs. 125, 126). The Churinga was worn upright in the helmet, the sticks with their attached tufts of black feathers radiated all round the base of the helmet, and the down-covered strings hung all round the face, which was completely concealed from view. The Churinga represented a special tree on the banks of the River Hugh at a place called Imanda, with which the ceremony was associated. The circles on the helmet and the hanging strings represented the roots; the circles on the body were frogs of various sizes, and the cross lines on the thighs represented the legs of various full-grown frogs. It must have been exceedingly uncomfortable for the performer because, in the first place, all the down with which his body was closely covered had been fixed on with human blood, which dried and contracted on the skin and must have produced a most unpleasant sensation. Further still the effect must have been very like that of being wrapped up in an eiderdown quilt and then exposed to the rays of a scorching sun — the temperature registered 140° F. in the sun—and all this quite apart from the actual weight of the helmet and Churinga.

When all was ready he gave orders to three of the older men to go and bring the younger men in. Two of the former carried Churinga attached to the end of human hair string, and they went one to each side of the spot



Fig. 124. CEREMONY OF ATNITTA ULPAILIMA.
Touching the stomachs of the men with some object used during the performance.



Fig. 125. PREPARING FOR A CEREMONY OF THE FROG TOTEM OF IMANDA.

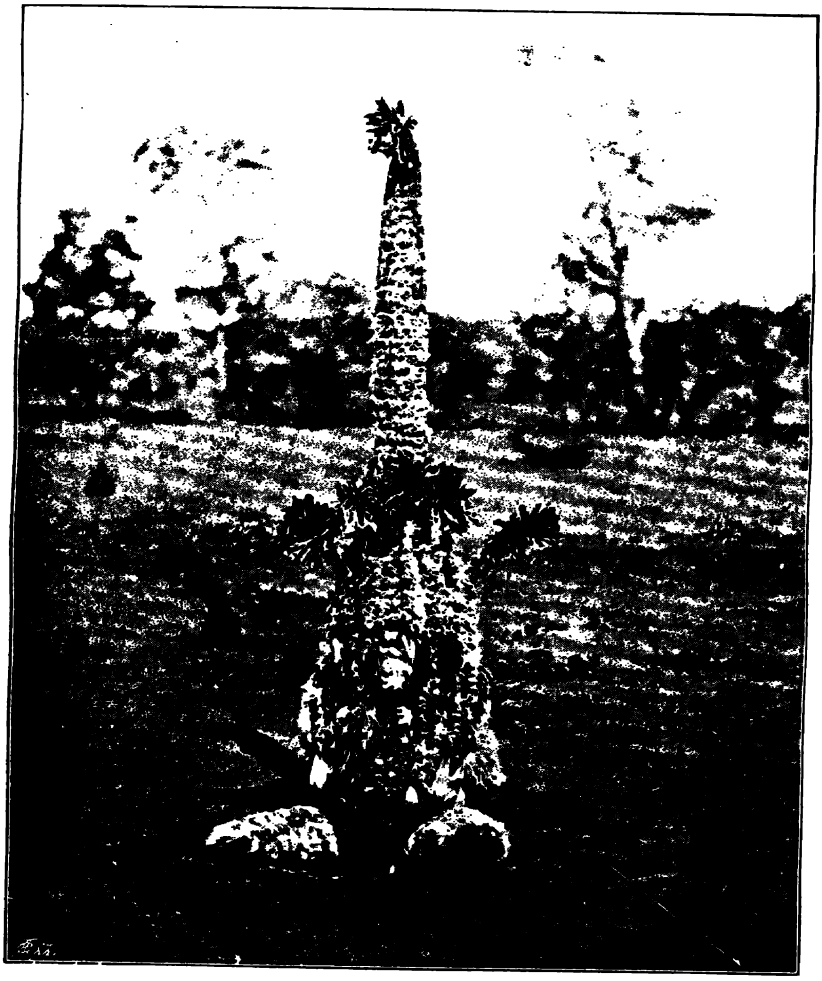


Fig. 126. CEREMONY OF THE FROG TOTEM OF IMANDA.

where the young men were seated. Then the shrill sound of the bull-roarer was heard, and amidst great excitement and much shouting, the young men were driven up the bank on to the ceremonial ground. As they came at a run through the belt of scrub bordering the river and saw the performer, they halted for a moment and lifted their hands as if in astonishment. Then, driven on by the three old men, they ran up to and circled round and round the performer for nearly three minutes until at length one of them—a Purula man—laid his hands on the performer's shoulders and the ceremony was over. As usual, when it was done, its meaning was explained to the younger men, none of whom had seen it before. After doing so they were hardly likely to forget that Imanda, a spot on the bank of the Hugh River where the old man lived and died, was a great centre of the frog totem and that the banks of the river there are inhabited by numberless human frog spirits —just as they, and the sandy bed of the river itself, are full of actual burrowing animal frogs at the present day.

In connection with a great many of the ceremonies objects called Nurtunjas were used (Plate VI. and Figs. 127, 128, 129). These varied to a remarkable extent in form and size, but they all agreed in one respect—each of them represented, for the time being, the object which gave its name to the totem group. One of the smallest and simplest had the form of a structure shaped very much like a monstrous cigar about three feet in length and six inches in diameter. In the centre was a straight piece of wood, round which long grass stalks were wound with human hair string. Circles of white down were fixed on with human blood at intervals of an inch, and one end was tipped with a bunch of emu feathers. This particular one represented a wild cat and

was placed upright in the ground during the ceremony (Fig. 127). Others, shaped in some cases like a torpedo and in others like a cross, were worn on the top of the head. The most usual method of making them was to take a long spear. In rare cases nothing more than a single layer of human hair string was wound round this and rings of white or red birds' down attached to it. The spear was almost always encased in grass stalks so as to increase the diameter. In one special ceremony, which referred to a celebrated kangaroo ancestor of Undiara, no fewer than twenty spears were lashed together to form a great Nurtunja, eighteen feet high. As can easily be imagined it took a great many human hair string girdles, wound tightly round and round, to enclose this column; and, when this was done, the whole was closely covered with rings of down. Finally fourteen Churinga were taken from the store, decorated with rings of down, and hung on to the Nurtunja at intervals. The preparing of this occupied a considerable part of one night, as it was for some reason made in the dark, or rather by aid of small camp fires, and the ceremony was performed just before sunrise. A Nurtunja of these dimensions is of course fixed upright in the ground, as it is too heavy to carry, and so also, for other reasons, are some of the smaller ones; but in other cases they are carried about by the performer, being held so that the lower end of the pole is grasped by both hands in the small of the back (Fig. 129). The body of the performer is slightly bent and so the Nurtunja is supported slanting forwards over the head of its bearer while at the same time he moves about backwards and forwards, the other men who are taking part in the performance dancing about in front of him with the Nurtunja hanging over their heads, sometimes almost parallel to the ground.

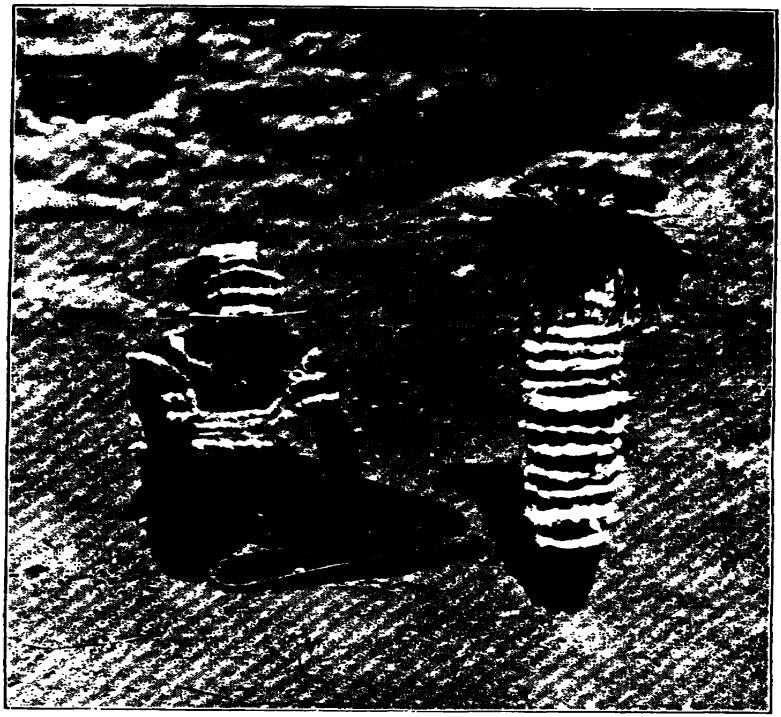


Fig. 127. CEREMONY OF THE WILD CAT TOTEM OF ARAPERA—TO ILLUSTRATE ONE FORM OF NURTUNJA.



Fig. 128. CEREMONY OF AN ANT TOTEM OF ALKNIWUKULLA—TO ILLUSTRATE ONE FORM OF NURTUNJA.

The lines of down represent roots of wattle trees amongst which the women dig for ants: the performers represent women.

The Nurtunja in one form or another is very characteristic of the northern Arunta; in the southern parts of the tribe it is less often used, its place being taken by a banner-like structure called a Waninga (Plate VI.). This again varies much in size and form, but consists essentially of a central bar with one or two smaller ones at right angles to it and strands of string so arranged as to form a flat expanded surface. The smaller ones measure only a foot or two in length. A larger one, such as is seen in Fig. 132, may reach a length of ten feet. This particular one was used in a ceremony of the rain or water totem. It was made out of a spear ten feet long with two sticks each three feet in length fixed on at right angles, one at a little distance from each end. Strands of human hair string were strung tightly and as close together as possible, in such a way that they ran parallel to the central spear from crossbar to crossbar. At the upper or lower end, as the case may be, each took a turn round the bar, then slanted off to twist round the spear and so back again to the bar on the opposite side, and then once more ran down the whole length between the two bars. In this way there was formed, as can be seen in the figure, a flat rectangular area between the bars and a smaller triangular area beyond each of them. For the space of about an inch and a half up each side, indicated by a white band, the human hair string was replaced by opossum-fur string whitened with pipe-clay. On the inner edge of this a band of the human hair string was red-ochred. The white transverse bands seen in the illustration, as well as the bands on the bodies of the two performers, were made of white down, and each end of the cross bars and the tip of the spear were ornamented with a tuft of the red-barred tail feathers of the black cockatoo, a bird often associated with rain ceremonies for

the simple reason that, in Central Australia, a flock of black cockatoos always indicates the presence of a water-pool not very far away.

Each of the various parts of the Waninga has a special significance, but it must always be remembered, when dealing with sacred objects such as this or the Nurtunja, that the same decoration will mean one thing when it is used in connection with one totem and quite a different thing when it is used in connection with another totem. On this particular Waninga the red string represented thunder, the white longitudinal bands lightning, and the black string rain falling. The white down represented clouds, and the red of the feathers and also of a number of wood parings smeared with blood and worn on the heads of the performers, represented the masses of dirty brown froth which float on the top and gather at the sides of a stream in flood.

We must confess that, after more than two months spent daily on the ceremonial ground, watching the men prepare and then perform their sacred ceremonies—the actual performance never taking more than five minutes—we sometimes felt that their old ancestors might have spent their time more profitably than, judging by tradition, they are reputed to have done. However, to the native everything was of the greatest importance, and by means of these ceremonies they hand on from generation to generation the history of the Alcheringa.

The last week of the Engwura was decidedly the more interesting part from a spectacular point of view; at all events it was more varied, in fact at times it was quite exciting and amply repaid us for a great deal of very monotonous work during the earlier part of the ceremony. Every day the men who were passing through it for the first time were taken out into the scrub under the charge



Fig. 129. IRUNTARINIA CEREMONY OF THE UNJIAMBA TOTEM OF APERA-NA-UNKUMNA—TO ILLUSTRATE ONE FORM OF NURTUNJA (p. 276).



Fig. 130. THE WOMEN THROWING FIRE OVER THE MEN.

of some of the older men for whom it was their duty to collect animal food. The collection of vegetable food, except such as is required for consumption on the spot, is usually left in the hands of the women. This is mere drudgery, whilst the capture of emus and kangaroos combines, with the acquisition of food, the excitement of the chase which appeals largely to savage man. At sunset every day the men were always brought back to the Engwura ground by way of the main camp, where only the women and children remained. Many of the older women had been present at previous ceremonies of the kind and knew exactly what they had to do. Under their guidance a supply of dry grass was collected and two fires made; at one the Purula and Kumara women gathered, and at the other the Panunga and Bulthara.

When the men returned, they halted for a short time out in the scrub on the opposite side of the river to the main camp. An old man went on ahead to tell the women that the party was approaching and, when all was ready, the men advanced. Each man carried a shield and also a considerable number of branches of a leafy shrub such as a cassia or an Eremophila. They approached first one group of women and then the other, holding their shields and branches over their heads to protect themselves from the bunches of burning grass which the women threw at and over them with good will (Fig. 130). Then they ran across to the Engwura ground, the women chasing them to the bank of the river. Occasionally one or two of the men got singed with the burning grass, but the shields and bushes formed a very effective shelter, as the men always ran in a compact body. This visit to the women's camp and the fire-throwing took place on each of the first four nights of the last week, during which the young men were sent away at sunrise for the whole day from the

ceremonial ground and were only allowed to return at sunset. On the fifth day the leader sent three old men out with instructions to prepare a long pole which was to form a very important feature during the conclusion of the ceremonies. According to tradition this is not supposed to touch the ground until it is brought into camp. On this occasion it took the form of a gum tree sapling about nine inches in diameter and some twenty feet in length ; the branches were removed and the bark peeled off, and then the three men carried it into camp and hid it in the bed of the creek—out of sight, for the present, of the young men. Meanwhile the leader, assisted by a few old men, was busy preparing a sacred object which was to figure in an important ceremony. It consisted of two wooden Churinga, each of them three feet long. They were placed side by side and enclosed in a great bundle of human hair string, covered with down, one end being ornamented with a tuft of feathers. The whole structure was called Ambilyerikirra, which means the flesh of a young child.

When the young men returned to camp at sunset, they first of all saw one of the usual ceremonies and then lay down in a long row with their heads on the Parra mound (Fig. 131). The leader and two men who were to assist him sat silent and motionless in front of them. Perfect silence was maintained, except for a little whispering every now and then amongst the older men, until nine o'clock. Then as soon as it was really dark, a number of small fires were lighted and bundles of sticks about two feet in length were arranged in radiating groups, each with one end in the fire. There were enough for every man to have three or four of them. A few of the older men went across to the main camp where the women and children were gathered together, and told them to protect



Fig. 131. THE YOUNG MEN LYING DOWN WITH THEIR HEADS ON THE PARRA, BEHIND WHICH ARE STACKED THE BUSHES WHICH THEY CARRY WHEN RETURNING TO CAMP.

themselves with boughs and sticks. Then, at a signal from the leader, the young men stood up, and we wondered what was going to happen, because we knew nothing more than the young men did and had to watch carefully so as not to miss anything. All the young men took fire-sticks and went in a body towards the river, the old men issuing instructions. On the bank they broke up, ran across the sandy bed and then up the opposite side, dividing into three parties—one in front of, one to the left, and one to the right of the women. When about twenty yards away from the line of women and children, who under the orders of the old men were waiting to receive them, they hurled their fire-sticks in rapid succession over the women's heads. Hundreds of them whizzed like rockets through the darkness, each with its trail of fiery sparks. The younger women and the children screamed with terror; the men were yelling at the top of their voices and of course the camp dogs added their quota to the din. Save for the smouldering ends of the fire-sticks strewn upon the ground, everything was soon dark again. The men turned and ran back as hard as they could to the ceremonial ground, while we followed after them, tumbling down the bank of the creek and tripping over bushes in our anxiety to see everything. Events succeeded one another so quickly that it was as much as we could sometimes do to keep pace both with them and the natives, and note down everything that occurred. However on this occasion, after a short but decidedly rapid and exciting traverse of the scrub and river bed, we got back to camp and found the three men who had remained behind solemnly sitting down before the Parra mound, the central man—the leader of the Engwura—grasping the Ambilyerikirra in both hands, each of his arms being supported by one of

the sidesmen (Fig. 133). No sooner had they all arrived in camp than the young men were once more made to lie down in a long row with their heads on the Parra, and in this position they had to remain all night. No one was allowed to move or utter a word without the permission of the old men in charge, who spent the whole time walking up and down. In fact no one moved from the Parra the whole night through. As soon as the young men were stretched out the leader began to lift the Ambilyerikirra slowly up and down; and without cessation, save for not more than half a minute every now and then, the central man, assisted by the other two, continued to do this all night long. The old men walked up and down singing and watching the young men, who remained perfectly silent, as did the three performers. One—the oldest man present—the "old white bat" as we used to call him, in allusion to his totem—was much in evidence, and evidently entered deeply into the spirit of the ceremony, singing without cessation until his cracked, squeaky voice gave way, and whispering solemnly every now and then to one or other of the younger men, all of whom, probably, were by no means sorry to have a comparatively quiet night's rest.

The night passed by very slowly. We had nothing to do save watch the monotonous rising and falling of the Ambilyerikirra, which went on without ceasing, and listen to the equally monotonous singing of the old men. Shortly after five o'clock, when the earliest faint glimmer of the approaching dawn could just be distinguished, the old men gave instructions to the young ones, who then rose to their feet, stiff and cold, for they had been denied the comfort of fires, and even in summer when you are stark naked, it grows chilly towards dawn out in the open. Then also, for the first time since nine o'clock on the



Fig. 132. CEREMONY OF THE WATER TOTEM, SHOWING HOW THE WANINGA IS CARRIED (p. 277).



Fig. 133. AMBILVERIKIRRA CEREMONY.

previous evening, the old leader and his two sidesmen ceased from lifting their arms up and down. It was a remarkable test of endurance, and after eight hours' continuous exertion it was no wonder that they looked tired and haggard. Instructions were shouted across to the women's camp, and then the young men and a few of the old ones ranged themselves in a solid square behind the three performers; the whole party crossed the river, and in silence approached the women, who stood in groups, moving their hands as if they were inviting the men to come near and at the same time saying softly "kutta, kutta." When within five yards of the women, the performers threw themselves on the ground so as to hide the Ambilyerikirra from view and the younger men immediately threw themselves on top of them, so that only their heads could be seen projecting beyond the pile of bodies. It was a very strange scene, and must have been rather a trying experience for the men underneath. After about two minutes, during which perfect silence was kept, the younger men got up and formed a square facing away from the women. Then the three performers rapidly followed, turned their backs on the women and were hustled through the square, which they led back to the Engwura ground; and thus this remarkable Ambilyerikirra ceremony came to an end.

The only explanation which the natives could give was that the rushing across to the women's camp and the throwing of fire sticks represented an attack made in the far past by a party of wild cat men, whose object was to kill and eat the people whom they attacked. The subsequent lying down in silence in front of the Ambilyerikirra indicated the taming of the wild men under the influence of the sacred Churinga. The natives also say that, if the strength of the three men were to

fail and they should stop lifting the Ambilyerikirra up and down, the men in front of them would die. In some respects the incident called to mind that of Aaron and Hur holding up the hands of Moses, and it is quite possible that the whole performance is commemorative of a reformatory movement which took place, some time in the far past, in regard to cannibalism. This is rendered all the more likely when it is remembered that one of the main objects of the Engwura is said to be that of making those who pass through it more kindly natured and less apt to quarrel. It is indeed the final stage in the training of the young men.

Unfortunately it was not possible to secure a photograph of the scene at the women's camp, because the ceremony took place too early in the morning; in fact we were back on the Engwura ground some time before the sun rose. Every one was rather tired, especially the old men, none of whom had had a wink of sleep and all of whom, moreover, had been singing for eight hours, almost without ceasing. As for ourselves, we had been watching carefully the whole time, because we never knew what was going to take place next, and we were rather glad to hear the old leader give orders for the men to be taken out in the bush for two days. This meant at least one day without a special ceremony; and really, though we could not afford to miss anything that took place, yet we sometimes wished that a little more variety could be introduced into the ceremonies and that their ancestors had done something more worth recording. It was a very quiet day in camp, for the old men were too tired to do anything much save sing, which they did for several hours at night, sitting by the Parra and clanging short pieces of wood together. These were supposed to represent little frogs which had been



Fig. 134. THE ERECTION OF THE SACRED POLE, OR KAU'AUA.
The man who has climbed up is arranging the Churinga.

buried in the Parra mound and then taken out, just as if they were frogs burrowing in the sand. The steady clank, clank, produced by one stick falling on another, was not unlike the call of the real frog.

The next day was a very important one, and we, as well as the natives, were kept busy. In the first place, the sacred pole, called Kauaua, was brought from its hiding place in the creek (Fig. 134). One man opened a vein in his arm and allowed blood to spurtle out until, five times over, he had filled the small space left for the hand in a shield. As if this were not enough, he actually afterwards walked slowly once up and down by the side of the Kauaua, allowing the blood to trickle over it in a thin stream. The pole was then smeared completely over, except the part which was to be put in the ground; the upper end was surmounted by a tuft of eagle-hawk feathers; whitened forehead bands were attached under this; a bunch of alpita tail tips hung down on each side; and, below the head band, a nose bone was fixed. The whole decoration was exactly that of a human head and there could be no doubt whatever as to what was intended. When the decoration was done, the pole was fixed firmly upright in the ground, about six yards from the centre of the Parra—so firmly that a man was able to climb it while he attached a few Churinga to its upper end; and then, for a few hours, the old men who remained in camp had a respite from their labours. What was the meaning of the Kauaua we could not find out. That the upper part represented a human head was perfectly clear; but why it was so, or whose head was represented, the natives did not know. We think that it must have been originally associated with the memory of some great leader of olden times, and that the Churinga represented some of those which every distinguished old ancestor

carried about with him; but the natives only know that thus it had been made and decorated in the Alcheringa, and, as it was then, so must it be now.

Leaving most of the old men at rest in the camp, we went to a secluded spot some few miles distant amongst the ranges to meet the younger men, who had to pass through another fire ordeal. We found them seated by the side of a waterhole, after having spent an uneventful night in the scrub. All but one of the old men in charge of them were busy at a spot not far away, but hidden behind a hill. Here we found that they were making a fire of logs and branches, about three yards in diameter (Fig. 135). When this was done they called the young men up and placed green boughs upon the red hot embers. Then, in batches of five or six at a time, the young men were made to lie upon the smoking boughs, which prevented them from actually coming into contact with the live embers beneath. No one might get up without the permission of the old men in charge, and each of them was made to remain on for about five minutes. Then, when all had been on and we thought the ceremony was over, the old men decided to repeat the process. They made the fire up again, this time a good deal hotter than before, and, amidst dense masses of smoke, one old man lifting up the boughs with a pole so as to allow of the free access of air, the young men lay down once more, wriggling about so as to prevent any one part of the body from remaining too long in contact with the hot boughs (Fig. 139). It must have been, to say the least, very uncomfortable. We went and knelt down on it to see what it was like, but got up rapidly, thankful that, even with clothes on, there was no old man who had the power to make us remain there longer. When it was over, the men had a well-earned rest of an hour's



Fig. 135. PREPARING THE FIRE FOR THE YOUNG MEN PASSING THROUGH THE ENGWURA.



Fig. 136. CEREMONY OF THE FROG TOTEM OF IMANDA.

The young men are standing in a line by the side of the Parra and facing towards the *Kauaua*, which they see for the first time. Of the two performers, the one on his knees represents a frog, and the one with the large Churinga in his head-dress, a tree. The bough shelter on the left is the one in which we spent our time during the Engwura.

length beside the water-pool. Quite apart from the artificial heat of the fire, the day was hot enough to make things uncomfortable, the thermometer registering 110·5° F. in the shade and 156° F. in the sun, the only shade, so far as we were concerned, being that of a few scantily-leaved gum trees. The fire was of course in the open, and the heat of the sand was so great that we could feel it easily through our boots.

At sunset the men returned to camp, and standing in a line in front of the Parra, they saw the Kauaua for the first time, and witnessed the last of the sacred ceremonies (Fig. 136). Whether or not it was a relief to them we do not know, but certainly it was to us. As soon as the ceremony was over, they once more lay down in a long row with their heads upon the Parra, and here they remained for more than two hours. After dark a dozen little fires were lighted around the base of the Kauaua; the younger men were told to get up and sat about in groups, each old man taking charge of the three or four to whom he was "abmoara." They might not speak to him until the whole ceremony was complete, though, of course, he was at liberty to speak to them and tell them what to do. Stores of red and yellow ochre, gypsum and charcoal had been provided and the old men proceeded to decorate the backs of all the younger men with designs belonging to the different totems. Every totem has its own "ilkinia," or badge, drawn in ochre, gypsum or charcoal, as the case may be, and every man has the right to paint the "ilkinia" of his own totem on his body. There was no such thing as sleep that night, and the scene was very picturesque. Across the river we could see the light of the fires in the main camp flickering through the trees, for the women, as well as the men, were busy and excited. At intervals one or other of the old men would shout across to the

women saying, "What are you doing?" and the reply would come back, "We are making a fire." "What are you making a fire for?" "To burn the men," they replied. The old men dared the women to come across to them, one old man being especially vigorous in his invitations. That there was something very unusual in progress was quite evident. Things were rather topsy-turvy. A man would call out to his Mura woman, that is mother-in-law, whom, in ordinary circumstances, he would not think of addressing, asking her to come across. Then again, there was no necessary relationship between the totem design which was drawn on the back of any man and his own totem, in fact there was actually only one man who was decorated with the design of his own totem; and as none of the younger men who were decorated were allowed to speak a word during the whole night, no one knew what design was being drawn on his back, unless he could tell by the feel. Under ordinary conditions no man has any right to wear the ilkinia, or badge of any totem other than his own; but, as we have said, everything was topsy-turvy on this occasion (Fig. 137).

We went across to the women's camp and found everybody there very wide awake. The Panunga and Bulthara women on the one hand, and the Purula and Kumara on the other, were busy with digging sticks, making two pits, side by side, each about two yards in diameter. When this was done, they gathered materials for making a large fire in each. All the time a regular kind of badinage was kept up between the men and women in their two camps, though neither party could see the other. It was just five o'clock in the morning when the decorating was complete. The women had lighted their fires, and all was ready for the concluding scene. The leader opened a passage through the middle of the Parra—the first time that it had been



Fig. 137. TOTEMIC DESIGNS PAINTED ON THE BACKS OF THE YOUNG MEN.



Fig. 138. THE YOUNG MEN GATHERED ROUND THE KAUAUA.

In the foreground the Parra and line of bushes are seen; they have been broken through by the leader of the ceremony, and through the opening thus made the young men are about to pass on their way to the women's camp.

touched since the start of the Engwura (Fig. 138). Each of the old men led his protégés several times round the mound, all of them yelling, "Whrr, Whrr, Whrr," loudly. After a short pause, during which the men gathered in a group round the base of the Kauaua, the whole party, in perfect silence, passed, one by one, through the break in the Parra and on towards the river. Each of the older men went at the head of his protégés, and linked together, hand in hand, they walked in single file. The picturesque procession stretched right across the sandy bed, from one bank to another, and on the far side they halted about fifty yards from the two fires, which were now giving out dense volumes of smoke, for the red-hot embers had been covered with green gum-tree boughs. The women and children were massed behind them in two groups, bending their knees and moving their hands up and down in the curious way that they always adopt during ceremonies. Except for the low "kutta, kutta" of the women, not a word was spoken, and for a minute the men stood silently watching the women, and the women watching them. Then each old man ran forward with his charges, taking a somewhat semi-circular course towards the women and back again. When each of them had done this once, they ran a second time round in much the same way—with, of course, the usual exaggerated high knee-action, only on this occasion they came up to the fires. Each man knelt down on one of them, Panunga and Bulthara men on those made by the Purula and Kumara women, and *vice versâ*. All that happened was that the women placed their hands on the men's shoulders and gently pressed them down, but no one remained on the fire for more than half a minute. The whole performance did not last more than half an hour, and when the last man had risen from the fires, they all silently returned to

the Engwura camp and, until sunrise, gathered together, talking quietly around the Kauaua. Very shortly after sunrise the ceremonial ground was deserted, save for one or two old men who took down the Kauaua and rubbed off all traces of blood, as far as possible. The young men were sent out into the bush, and before the ban of silence which existed between each of them and the older man who had charge of him could be removed, he had to secure and present to the former a meat offering —usually a wallaby or small kangaroo—after which the old man touched his mouth with a sacred object and he was free to speak (Fig. 140). And thus ended the Engwura.

Commencing in the middle of September there had been a constant succession of ceremonies, never less than one and often as many as three, four and five each day, until nearly the end of December, when the ceremonial ground was dismantled and the visitors from distant parts returned to their own hunting grounds. To us the whole time had been full of interest. We had been living amongst and witnessing the daily life of savages who were yet in the Stone Age, and whose manners of life, customs and beliefs were akin to those of the early ancestors of mankind—just as the quaint, egg-laying and pouched mammals on which they fed were akin to, in fact the surviving relics of, ancient groups of primitive animals which have elsewhere been replaced by higher forms.

For months afterwards the ceremonial ground was what the natives call ekirinja, that is, forbidden to the women and children. The Parra mound was left untouched, but the little gum-tree branches, exposed to the heat of the summer sun, soon disappeared, and the wind carried away the sand of which the mound was made until not a trace of it was left.



Fig. 139. YOUNG MEN ON THE FIRE (p. 286).



Fig. 140. CEREMONY OF RELEASING FROM THE BAN OF SILENCE.
Touching the mouths of the younger men with a sacred object.

The Arunta native, as we knew him, still used the flaked chip of quartzite, attached to the end of his spear-thrower, in the making of most of his implements such as shields, spears, pitchis and spear-throwers, but now he is rapidly becoming civilised. In 1896, when the Engwura was held, the Arunta were but little contaminated. Such intercourse as they had with the meagre and sparsely-scattered white population had in no way affected them, so far as their customs and beliefs were concerned, and they still continued to perform their ancient ceremonies without change. When we were again amongst them five years later, in 1901, we found that already a great change had taken place, and since then a "gold rush" in the Macdonnell Ranges has completed their demoralisation. It needs a great deal of self-control and restraint on the part of the younger men and a large amount of moral influence on the part of the older men to make it possible to hold, successfully, such a long and trying ceremony as the Engwura. Indeed it is possible to do this only so long as the older men retain their ascendancy, and this they do because the traditions of the tribe are so clear and explicit in regard to what will happen in the event of the younger members disobeying the elders or breaking tribal custom. Continual contact with the white man soon shows the younger natives that what they have been taught to believe in regard, for example, to evil magic is not true, and naturally they conclude that the same applies all round. The old men see with sorrow that their control over the younger men has gone and refuse to hand on any knowledge of sacred matters to descendants whom they consider to be degenerate and who have, as a matter of fact, lost all interest in them. The Arunta tribe will never again hold an Engwura.

CHAPTER XI

THE ATNINGA OR AVENGING PARTY

ANY death which is not clearly due to a wound received during a fight, or to an accident—that is, any death due to what we call "natural causes"—is a mystery to the native because he has no conception of illness as due to disease. He has to find some satisfactory explanation, and has come to the conclusion that any such death, or any illness, is the result of evil magic of some kind. The culprit who is guilty of putting this evil into the patient may be either a human being or one of the spirits. Only a medicine man who is himself very strong in magic has the slightest chance of treating successfully a patient suffering from the evil magic of a spirit. There is however a better chance of recovery if the cause of illness be a poison bone or stick implanted in the body by a human being. If the medicine man be successful, the recovered patient ascertains who it was who "gave him the bone" and retaliates when he feels able to do so. If death results—that is, if the evil magic be too potent for the medicine man—then, sooner or later, the relatives discover who placed the magic in the dead man's body and an avenging party, called "Atninga" by the Arunta natives, is organised.

While we were at Alice Springs it was found out that the death of one of the natives, a year before, was due to



Fig. 141. RUBBING THE THIGHS OF THE MEN WHO ARE TAKING PART IN THE ATNINGA, ARUNTA TRIBE.

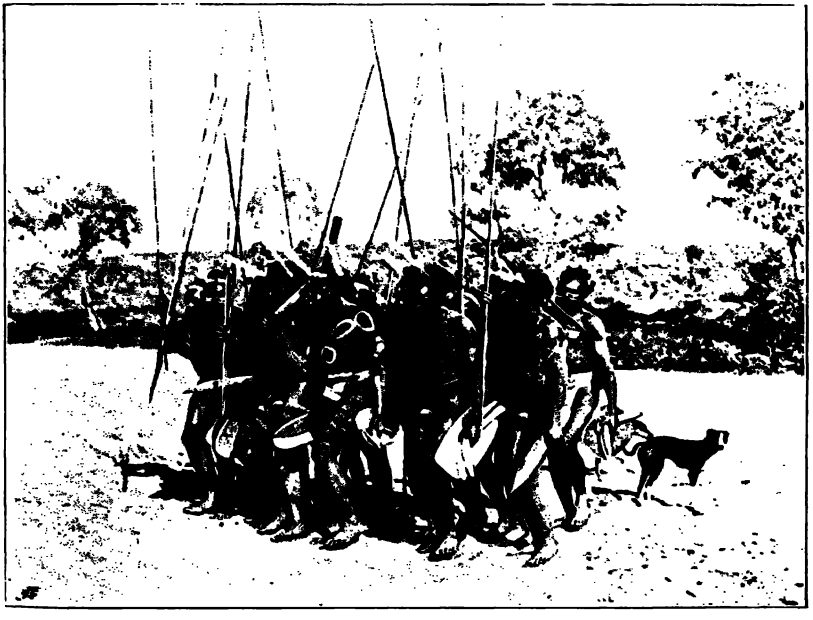


Fig. 142. ATNINGA PARTY, WEARING THE ILKUNTA, APPROACHING THE CEREMONIAL GROUND, ARUNTA TRIBE.

his having been "given a bone" by a man who belonged to a group of natives living more than one hundred miles away to the north-west. While the party whose welcome has been already described was in camp the matter was talked over and it was decided to send an avenging party out.

One day a brother of the dead man came to the Ungunja, that is, the men's camp, bringing with him a girdle made from hair which had been cut from the dead man. This special form of girdle is called "Kirra urkna." "Kirra" is flesh and "urkna" is a word applied to the sap which comes from a tree when it is cut, or to the juice which exudes from meat. The spirit of the dead man is supposed to be especially associated with the girdle, which possesses magic power that can pass from it to its wearer or, indeed, to any one whom it touches. The man who carried the girdle went round to all those in camp, who one after the other rubbed their thighs with it—the object of this being twofold, first to make them strong in fighting, some of the magic passing from the girdle into them, and secondly to pledge them to take part in the avenging expedition (Fig. 141).

This was in the afternoon; nothing further was done till evening when, sitting and singing loudly around their camp fires, they made a large number of the flaked sticks called "Ilkunta." Early next morning, armed with spears, boomerangs, spear-throwers and shields, and wearing the Ilkunta on their heads, the members of the avenging party formed a close square in the camp and then came dancing along yelling loudly and brandishing their spears (Fig. 142). The brother of the dead man, wearing the Kirra urkna, acted as leader, and every now and then he left his post in advance and rushed wildly round and round the party, crouching down and pretending to throw his

spear at an imaginary foe with a look of intense fury that was well simulated. After traversing about half a mile in this fashion the men sat down on the sand of the creek bed, each man with his spear fixed upright in the sand beside him. Here they were joined by a lot more men who were not going on the expedition, and after a long quiet pause, they all walked across the river bed, climbed the bank and low rise on the opposite side and then, forming into a body, came dancing on to the ground on which the welcoming dance had been previously held. First of all, holding their spears aloft in one hand and their shields in the other, they rushed backwards and forwards, stopping every now and then and bending nearly double while they yelled "Wah! Wah!" After another pause they threw their shields and spears to one side, and each man took hold of both ends of a boomerang which he carried over his shoulders. Bending forwards, they rushed up and down, wheeling round at each end of the ground like a company of well-trained soldiers (Fig. 143). Every now and then they halted for a few moments, marking time with high knee-action and yelling just as before. When this performance was over they gathered together and rested for a few moments. No women or children were allowed anywhere near the ground, which was shut in by hills so that, though it was broad daylight, they were quite hidden from the view of strangers. The final ceremony began by the men opening veins and sprinkling blood over one another. In some cases blood is drunk, but it was not on this occasion. The object of this blood sprinkling is twofold, first of all it is supposed to make them what the natives call "uchuilima," that is lithe and active, and secondly it serves to bind them all together and to prevent anything like treachery. If there should be, by chance, any man



Fig. 143. ATNINGA PARTY PERFORMING A BOOMERANG DANCE, ARUNTA TRIBE.



Fig. 144. ATNINGA PARTY DANCING ROUND THE SPEARS WHICH ARE TO BE USED.

amongst them who belongs to the same locality as the doomed man and is thus presumably friendly with him, he is forced to drink blood, whether he likes it or not; and, having once done this, he is bound not to aid his friends, by giving them warning of the coming of the avenging party.

After this the spears were all bunched together and held upright by three old men, who rattled them vigorously while all the rest of the party danced round and round, most of the men holding their spear-throwers in the uplifted right hand with the knobbed end pointing downwards, while they yelled aloud (Fig. 144). Finally the men who were actually going to take part in the spearing, if they had the chance of doing so, performed a curious dance round and round in a circle with their hands clasped behind their heads (Fig. 145). Suddenly they all fell down flat on the ground and remained in this position in dead silence for a few minutes. This quaint little ceremony was supposed to indicate the mourning of the relatives of the man whom they were intending to kill (Fig. 146). When it was over they all rose to their feet, each man took his spear, spear-thrower, shield and boomerang and, led on by the wearer of the Kirra urkna, they at once left the ceremonial ground and started away northwards, across the hills, in the very best of spirits, just as if they were going on a pleasure trip. There were twenty-eight of them all told. They carried nothing but their weapons, and during the whole of their journey—about one hundred and thirty miles each way—they had to depend for food entirely upon such seed and bulbs as they could gather and what animals they could catch on the march.

Naturally, on an expedition such as this, they waste no time and travel rapidly; on the outward journey because, otherwise, word might reach the enemy of their intentions,

and on the home journey because they are anxious to avoid being overtaken, if the members of the camp to which the culprit belongs should be sufficiently valiant and strong enough in numbers to attempt to pursue them with the object of speedy retaliation.

The party left Alice Springs on May 12th, and, though we were anxious to press on to the north and get amongst new tribes, we determined to see the matter through and await the return of the Atninga. A week passed by and there was still no news of them. They had a long way to go, but in circumstances such as these, it is surprising how much ground a native will cover day after day, and some anxiety began to be felt, especially in the women's camp, as it is always possible that the men, instead of killing their enemy, may be surprised and return minus one or two of their own party. On the eighth morning there was still no sign of them, and watchers were placed on hills which commanded a distant view of the track by which they were expected to return. One day, when some distance away from the women's camp, we were puzzled by the appearance of two weird-looking white objects, and on going near to investigate, found that they were two old women who were in deep mourning and had plastered themselves over from head to foot with white pipe-clay. Naturally, as they were stark naked, they stood out in strong contrast to all and everything around them, and looked hideous in the extreme. Every now and then they broke out into a loud wail. This special form of mourning for the dead is carried out by the women only, and every one who has lived for long near a native camp, in the wilder parts of Australia, knows well the uncanny sound of the weird death wail, coming from the women's camp, often in the dead of night, when all else is perfectly silent.

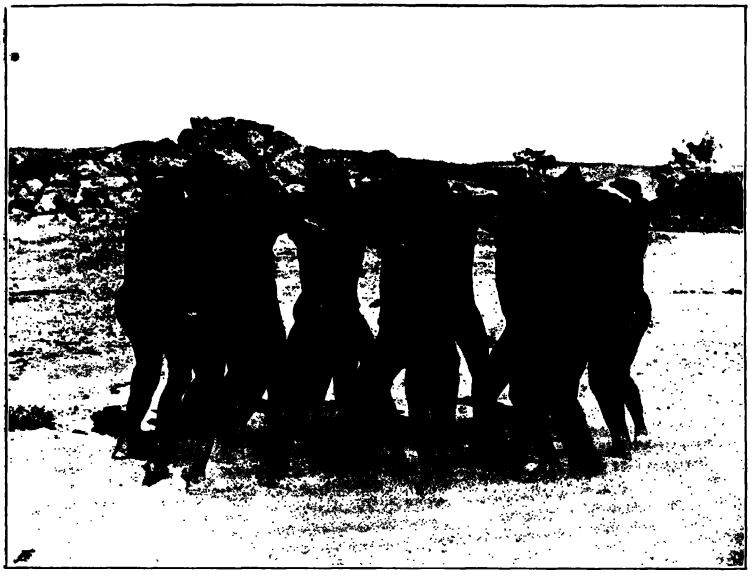


Fig. 145. ATNINGA, ARUNTA TRIBE.
Dance of the men who are actually to take part in the killing.

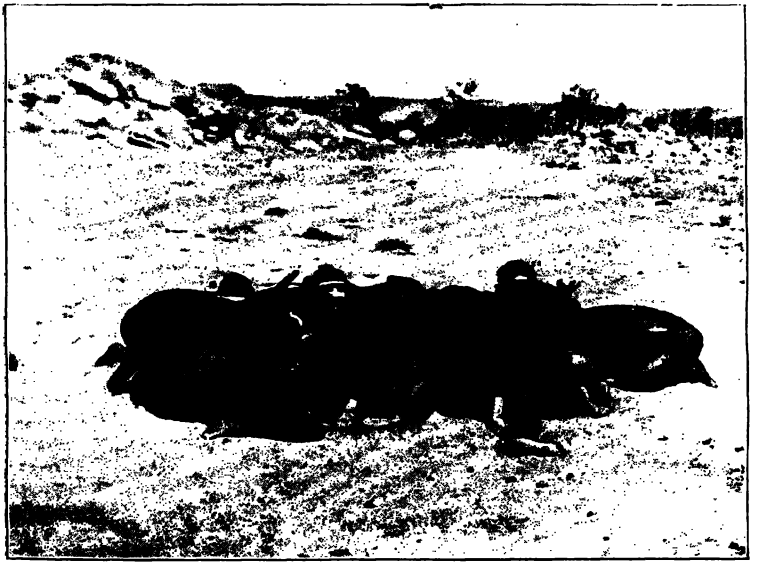


Fig. 146. ATNINGA.
The men who are to take part in the killing lying prostrate on the ground. They are supposed to be imitating the sorrow and mourning of the relatives of the man whom they intend to kill.



Fig. 147. ATNINGA, ARUNTA TRIBE.
Women testing the shields of the men who have taken part in the killing. The woman on the right being in deep mourning is daubed all over with pipe-clay.

On the morning of the tenth day after the departure of the Atninga there was suddenly great excitement in the camp, because the watchers on the hills announced that they could see the men returning in the distance. As they wound in and out amongst the hills, it was impossible for some time to tell whether they were all safe, but as they came nearer, it was seen that they were painted black and all wore little leafy twigs in their noses and under their forehead and arm bands—a sure sign that they had been successful. As they came down the bed of the river, prancing along in a solid square, with the usual high knee-action, each man holding up his spear in one hand and shield in the other, one of the old pipe-clayed women went out to meet them. They stood in perfect silence while she performed a most grotesque dance in front of them, yelling wildly all the time (Fig. 148). After she had finished they moved on further down the creek and then came to a halt. Once more the old woman danced in front of them, and harangued them at the top of her exceedingly shrill voice. While this was in progress the men who had actually done the killing and were called Immirinja, came and stood in the front rank, each man resting his spear on the ground and holding his shield so that the convex side faced towards the women. The other men who had been merely onlookers, called Alknalarinika, stood behind. A younger woman now came up, and the two then struck every shield with a fighting club (Fig. 147). This little ceremony is called "ulquita atuma" ("ulquita" a shield, and "atuma" to strike) and, during its performance, silence was maintained and every one looked very solemn. If the blow results in a firm, strong sound, then all is well, but if the sound be hollow, as if there were something the matter with the shield, then all is wrong. The spirit of the dead man is supposed to follow them up in the form of a little

bird called Chichurkna, and the hollow sound indicates that the bearer of that particular shield is under the influence of its evil magic. On this occasion every shield gave out the right sound and then the women retired. The Immirinja men sat down in silence by themselves, and the Alknalarinika went and joined the other men who had remained at home, recounting to them what had happened during the expedition. In this part the bed of the stream was fully a hundred yards broad, and after a short pause of about fifteen minutes, the Immirinja men arose and, in twos and threes, each man holding his shield aloft, they ran round in a semi-circle to where an old man had stationed himself and had their shields tested by him (Fig. 149). For another hour they sat silently by themselves, and then each man went off to his own camp and the serious part of the Atninga was over. For many days after this they must, however, be very careful because the Chichurkna bird hovers over the camp, trying to harm them. Its cry is like that of a little child, and when once they have heard it, they are safe, for it cannot then hurt them; but every man paints himself with black and at night-time wears the tail tips (alpita) of the rabbit bandicoot, because, as this is an animal which is wide awake at night, any part of it naturally keeps its wearer alert and wakeful so that he will hear the Chichurkna, if it should come near. Also he must be especially careful not to allow the bird to catch sight of his right arm, while he is asleep, or else it will be paralysed—a belief associated with the fact that this is the arm with which he threw the spear that killed the enemy.

Needless to say the valiant deeds of the party did not suffer in the recital, but on this occasion it was hard to make much of the exploit, which consisted, not in killing the man of whom they really went in search, but his



Fig. 148. RETURN OF THE ATNINGA, ARUNTA TRIBE (p. 297).
Old woman haranguing the men.



Fig. 149. ATNINGA, ARUNTA TRIBE.
Men testing the shields.

father, an old man whom they had come across when he was alone in the scrub, some distance from his camp. The son had heard of their coming, and not unnaturally had thought discretion the better part of valour and cleared away; but the spearing of the old man seemed quite right and proper to them, because they said that he had known of his son's evil intention and had not prevented him from carrying it out.

As can easily be understood, deeds of this kind naturally lead to retaliation; and, long before this, one or two of the Atninga will most probably have been the victims, in their turn, of an avenging party.

CHAPTER XII

ALICE SPRINGS TO BARROW CREEK

WHILST travelling from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs we had realised the fact that the "express wagon" which had been used for the carriage of our heavier stores was by no means capable, either of carrying them all, or of standing the wear and tear of the heavy track that we had to traverse across the continent. At Alice Springs we were fortunate enough to find a stray wagon which had been used for the cartage of stores from the head of the railway line, and as this was just what we needed we secured it and transferred all our heavy luggage to it. It was fairly heavily loaded when it left Alice Springs, and its departure was viewed with sorrow by the natives, who had profited largely by our stores of tobacco, knives and hatchets. Some of them would cheerfully have accompanied us if we had given them the slightest encouragement. On our part we were equally sorry to leave them. For many years we had known them well, and we realised that, great as was the change that had taken place in the tribe between the year 1895, in which the Engwura was held, and the time of our present visit, changes would in the future be more rapid, until the time came when the once large and powerful Arunta tribe would be represented by a mere degraded remnant, exactly as has happened in the case of tribe after tribe elsewhere in Australia.

The rapidity with which a tribe undergoes degradation,

as soon as it comes into contact with civilisation, is astonishing. Disease plays havoc with its numbers; old customs are rapidly forsaken or modified out of recognition, and beliefs, which for ages past have been firmly held, are quietly dropped, partly because they meet with the contempt and ridicule of the white men and partly because the young men soon learn that they are not altogether worthy of credence. Unfortunately not a little of the information published concerning Australian tribes has been gathered from decadent remnants, and in many cases it is incomplete and misleading. In his last paper, the late Dr. Howitt laid special stress upon this fact, pointing out how careful anthropologists ought to be in regard to accepting evidence derived from an examination of tribes which have been forced, as a result of diminution in numbers, to modify their rules. Dr. Howitt was referring especially to changes that take place in the social organisation of the tribe, but the danger is even greater in respect to accepting evidence from such tribes in regard to their beliefs. It was a fortunate thing for us that we had been able to study the Arunta before they had become degenerate, for recent years have seen a great change in the tribe, and now it would be absolutely impossible to study them with anything like thoroughness or with the certainty that you were dealing with their primitive customs and beliefs, uninfluenced by contact with civilisation. Even in 1901 the condition of the Arunta tribe was, as we have said, very different from what it was six years earlier, when we witnessed the Engwura ceremony, and the rush to the Arltunga gold field, in 1902, practically completed its demoralisation.[1]

[1] Not one of the old men, represented in Figures 109 and 110, with whom we were closely associated during the carrying on of the Engwura is, we regret to say, now alive. With them have passed away the leaders of the tribe, and there is no one to succeed them.

Starting the wagon on a few days ahead, as we could travel more rapidly than it could, we made arrangements to send down to the head of the railway the collection of native implements, the cinematograph and everything that we did not want to carry through to the north with us, because when once we had left Alice Springs, we should be out of touch with mails or means of carriage other than our own team. By dint of utilising all manner of bits of wood and stray boards, Chance contrived to make cases which held all our collections. As some of the spears and sacred objects were more than ten feet long, the task was not an easy one. The packages had to be so secure that they could withstand the severe jolting of a journey of four hundred miles on camel-back, with its daily loading and unloading, then transference to the railway for seven hundred miles, and then steamer from Adelaide to Melbourne. However, thanks to Chance's ingenuity it was accomplished successfully and they all reached Melbourne in safety, months before we did. It was now nearly mid-winter—a most delightful time in the Macdonnell Ranges—with brilliant warm days and equally brilliant, cool, in fact often cold, nights, when the thermometer frequently registered several degrees below freezing point. From a climatic point of view it would be difficult to find anything more bracing or invigorating than the winter months in Central Australia, and we could have stayed on at Alice Springs with pleasure. However we had to press northwards, for we were not yet half-way across the continent; and so, early on May 25th, we said good-bye to our friends at the telegraph station.

During the time we were there the station master, Mr. Bradshaw, was absent, but Mr. McFeat, the officer in charge, rendered us every assistance that he possibly could; in fact we received the greatest kindness from every

member of the staff and not least from Mrs. Bradshaw, who was living in this far-away spot with her husband and children. The station quarters at Alice Springs are picturesquely situated and comfortable, and the life there has its attractions for a man, but to a woman it must often be a great deal more than trying and terribly monotonous. It sounds well enough to say that a mail runs through from Oodnadatta once every fortnight, taking ten days over the journey—it used to run only once in six weeks—but this ten days' traverse of unoccupied, arid country, with waterholes often few and far between, would try the nerves of most women and not a few men, and the ten days may lengthen out considerably in dry weather when horses cannot run and the mail must be carried on camels.

Leaving the telegraph station we turned to the north, and were soon in the midst of the jumble of hills which form the northern part of the Macdonnell Ranges. Though they are now much lower in height, and more insignificant than the present main range, they represent an ancient, lofty ridge, long since denuded, but still forming the line of watershed (Fig. 150). The track zig-zags in and out among the gneissic hills, and travelling was slow and tedious, and also a severe test of the strength of our buckboard. Two or three times we thought it must upset, when the wheels on the near side were going over boulders and those on the off side were slipping down a smooth, sloping rock face. Fortunately we were only carrying a light load—just what we wanted for two or three days, together with special luggage such as our photographic materials—and after several hours we got over the worst part, and just before sunset reached a little outlying cattle station called Bond Springs. The station consisted of a one-roomed, thatched hut, inhabited

by two white men, with a few small out-buildings, and was the last habitation we should see between Alice Springs and Barrow Creek. An examination of the buck-board showed that we had come through with only two bolts snapped, for which slight amount of damage we were thankful.

This was our last night among the ranges. Early next morning we started off, and after two or three miles of winding in and out amongst the hills, we crossed a saddle and saw the great Burt Plains stretching away to the north. To east and west of us the Macdonnell Ranges extended as far as we could see, sweeping round towards the north-east to join the Strangway Ranges, the outline of whose higher peaks we could dimly discern far away on the horizon. The hills dipped abruptly beneath the plain which stretched monotonously to the northern horizon.

Looking ahead across the country that we had to traverse there was absolutely nothing to be seen but an endless sea of dreary mulga, but it was a relief to be safely out of the hills. We had now passed from the Lake Eyre into the Lake Woods basin, the southern boundary of which is the line of watershed in the Macdonnell Ranges. The elevation of this watershed, thirty miles north of Alice Springs, is approximately 3000 feet; that of the very southern margin of the Burt Plains, where we passed down on to them from the hills, is 2000 feet. From here the land falls away, very gradually, towards the north. At Barrow Creek, 140 miles from Alice Springs, it is 1700 feet, and we had before us the prospect of crossing this practically level plain whose surface is only broken by a few isolated hills. The telegraph line was away to the west of us, and, all day long, we drove on through the mulga scrub. It

was terribly desolate, with scarcely even a bird to be seen, and we dodged in and out amongst the scrub, until, just before sunset, we crossed the sandy bed of a dry creek and came on to a bleak, open plain, across which, in the distance, we saw the telegraph line and found Chance camped close to it, beside the Burt Well. This is one of a series of wells that have been sunk at intervals along the telegraph line in order to render it possible to cross the Central area of the continent, where there is no surface water, except during the rain season. If it were not for these wells, it would be practically impossible to take horses across the country during the greater part of the year. Each well has a strong palisade round it so as to keep horses and stray cattle out, and there is a kind of grid over the opening, so that no wild dogs or smaller animals can get down, as they certainly would attempt to do but for this precaution. Careless travellers occasionally leave the well open, and then you are almost certain to find the water polluted by the decaying body of a dingo.

We had given Chance special instructions to have a plum dough ready for us, and when we came into camp, this was boiling away in an old kerosene tin and we were soon comfortably settled down in front of a big fire. Fortunately there is no difficulty about getting wood when you are camped in the mulga scrub, which is a decided blessing, for in winter time it is bitterly cold on these plains when the sun has set. All night long a biting south-east wind blows, and the thermometer almost always goes down below freezing point.

We were up early next morning, but some of the horses had strayed and upset our plans, so, after sending one of our boys out in search of the missing ones, we started off, leaving Chance and the wagon behind. About half a mile from our camp we struck the telegraph

line, and for twenty-four miles we followed along by the side of this, through a cutting two chains wide in the mulga scrub (Fig. 151). The track was thickly strewn with stumps of mulga which had been cut down so that the scrub should not interfere with the telegraph poles, which streaked away north and south in a bee-line from one horizon to the other. There was not a sign of animal life except endless ant hills of a very curious form. Mile after mile the ground was strewn with them, almost as thickly as if they were gravestones in an old churchyard. Each of them consisted of a flat slab of red earth with the broad sides facing east and west and the thin ends north and south; wherefore the special kind of ant that makes them is known as the meridian ant. There were simply thousands and thousands of them, and they gave the country the appearance of a vast graveyard. In the more northern parts of Australia they are larger; here the usual size was about five feet high, perhaps five or six inches in thickness from east to west and three or four feet in width from north to south.

After travelling twenty-four miles we came to Connor's Well and camped—building a brake of boughs to keep the cold wind off at night (Fig. 152). At 8 a.m. next morning it was 29° F. behind our shelter, and, as we had to wait for the wagon, we did not turn out of our rugs till 8.30, which was our record late hour, as usually we were up before sunrise. We always slept, of course, in the open, as there was very little chance of rain, and early every morning as we travelled across these wide plains, we noticed that the dawn was heralded, quite an hour before sunrise, by a faint cone of light stretching upwards in the eastern sky.

Connor's Well was about as uninteresting a spot as could be imagined. There was nothing but thin mulga

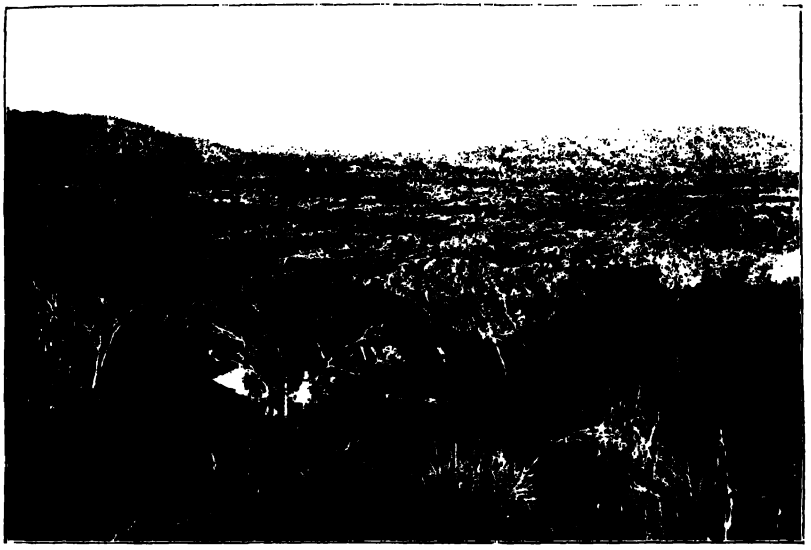


Fig. 150. THE NORTHERN MACDONNELL RANGES (p. 303).



Fig. 151. TELEGRAPH LINE PASSING THROUGH THE MULGA SCRUB.

scrub with very scanty herbage here and there upon the ground—just enough to give the horses a feed. Of animal life we only saw one or two kites, a solitary large emu that came and had a good look at us and then made off, and a flock of little chestnut-eared finches twittering all day long round the trough into which we drew water for the horses. At night the dingoes howled aloud, but at a respectful distance from our camp fire. We waited patiently all day long, climbing a telegraph pole every now and then, to get a better view across the country, but there was no sign of Chance or the wagon, and we were just turning in at nine o'clock, when we heard a distant rumbling. Fortunately there was no lack of timber, so we lighted a great fire to cheer Chance on his way and to show him that he was not far from the camp, into which he came some time later, but minus two of the horses. They had wandered away during the night in search of water, and the boy had not yet been able to find them.

Next morning, before sunrise, one of the boys went back on horseback in search of the two missing horses. We left a supply of food for him, hidden away safely, in case any hungry natives should pass by and appropriate it, and after filling the trough with water, started off northwards and soon reached a series of low hills known as Hann's Range. Just in the middle of them there was a "native well," or rather the remains of one. It was merely a little hole dug out in the sand. The water trickles along underground in the sandy bed of a creek, which is quite dry on the surface, and every now and then, as at this spot, it is blocked by a mass of rock so that it accumulates and a small supply can be obtained by digging. Unfortunately a white man, who had not had much experience, thought that he could improve on the

native plan by enlarging the well. Accordingly he set to work to do so, by means of dynamite. He certainly succeeded in increasing the size of the hole, but at the same time he shattered the rock, with the result that nothing was left to dam back the water, and now the well is useless, and the stumps that he put round it alone remain as evidence of his unfortunate interference.

We passed through a narrow defile amongst the hills, dotted over with native pines (Callitris), which formed a welcome change to the dreary mulga on the flats. However we soon passed out on to the plains again, and after a short day's march, camped by the side of a Government well. The wagon followed after a few hours, and we filled our large tank holding one hundred gallons of water, because ahead of us we had to traverse more than thirty miles of country with no water. All next day the track was very bad with mulga stumps and ant-hills amongst which we had to dodge in and out, and, in parts, the country was as desolate as it could be. Even the porcupine grass could hardly grow, and for miles there was not a trace of a shrub. After slowly traversing some twelve miles of this country, we once more came into the mulga scrub, and late in the afternoon we camped. Chance with the wagon came on slowly. Fortunately, it was near the time of full moon, so that we could travel after sunset, and we lighted a huge fire which he saw miles away. It was after eight o'clock when we came into camp. We gave the horses a drink and close-hobbled them to prevent them from making back to the last well. An hour later, to our great relief, the boy came in with the two missing horses. He had had three days of real hard work. On the first he was up at daybreak, tracking the horses for at least fifteen miles on foot, and then bringing them back into camp, he himself riding one bare-back, after which he came

with the wagon into our next camp. The morning after he was off again before sunrise, and, during the ensuing two days, he not only followed back the tracks of the missing horses over very difficult country where there was not a drop of water, and found them, but he also followed us up and brought them into camp, only an hour after the arrival of the wagon. It was a masterly piece of tracking, because he had nothing whatever to guide him, except the footmarks of the horses, and he had not only to follow them up on the hard ground, but also to distinguish, among the twenty that formed our team, the special two of which he was in search, and the particular spot at which they had wandered away from the others. Whilst tracking them he had ridden over at least sixty miles of wild desolate country, and when he came into camp, he was dead-beat, and could hardly stand up. After a good meal and a plentiful supply of tobacco he very soon recovered, and he, or rather we, turned in for the night. He and his mate were as cheerful as possible, and the last thing that we heard was their merry laughter as they recounted their mutual experiences. The night was cold and we had a blazing fire near our feet to keep us warm, but the two black boys had three small ones, one between them and one on each side. In regard to fires the native looks upon the white man as a most irrational kind of being who, for some unknown reason, makes a fire so large and hot that he cannot go near to it, instead of making a little one which can be kept alight with a very small supply of fuel.

The next day we had to travel thirty-two miles before reaching our camping ground. This does not sound much, but it took us from nine in the morning till half-past five in the afternoon, while Chance and the wagon took two days to cover the distance. The country was

somewhat more interesting than before, with low ranges all round us and good grass. A few miles north of Ryan's Well we saw the first bean tree (*Erythrina vespertilio*). This is its southern limit in Central Australia. It grows to a height of twenty or thirty feet, its foliage is light green, and in spring time it is covered with orange-coloured flowers, the fruit being a pod containing bright red beans, which are much used in the manufacture of ornaments, especially necklaces (Fig. 153). The trunk may be a yard in diameter, and its wood is of the greatest service to the natives. It is very soft, and so easily worked that the natives have no difficulty in chopping out blocks of it with their stone tomahawks and then, with the aid of a sharp-edged flint, fashioning them into shields and wooden bowls. They manufacture both these implements in large numbers, and trade them away down to the south where the bean tree does not grow. The shields vary in size from about two feet in length by six or eight inches in width, to three feet by ten inches—specimens of this size being, however, rarely met with. For ordinary use the smaller ones are much more convenient, the larger ones being very cumbersome to handle; indeed the very largest are probably used only during ceremonies. Their symmetrical shape is extraordinary, when it is remembered that the whole work is done by means of a small flint, fixed on to the end of a stick. In a well-formed specimen, such as the larger one seen in Fig. 154, the outline is perfectly symmetrical, and the two sides are gracefully arched in such a way that, in a cross section through the middle of the shield, the front surface is convex, the under surface is flat in the centre or perhaps even slightly convex, while the margins are strongly concave. Both the back and front are marked by very regular close-set grooves running along the



Fig. 152. CAMP AT CONNOR'S WELL (p. 306).



Fig. 153. BEAN TREE.

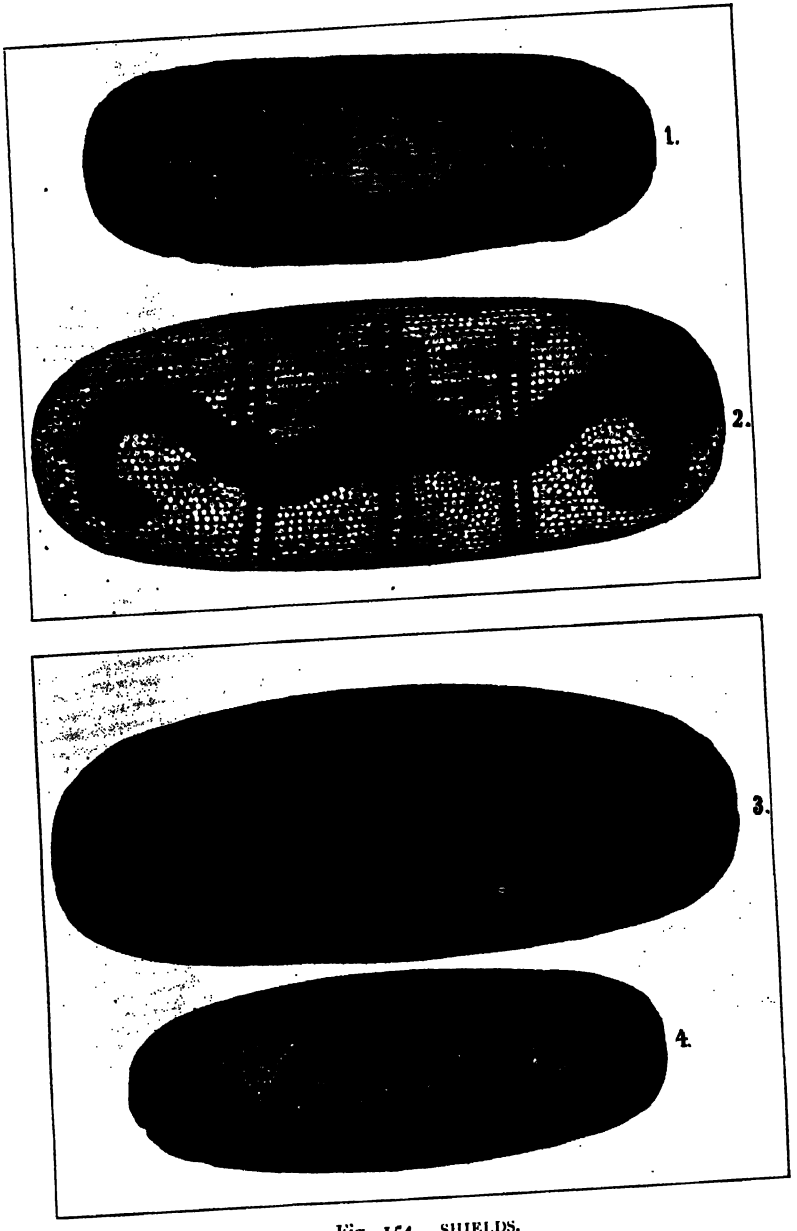


Fig. 154. SHIELDS.

1, Convex face of a shield, showing grooves made by the rubbing of a spear-thrower during the process of fire-making; 2, Convex face; 3, Concave face of a large decorated shield; 4, Convex face of a smaller decorated shield.

length of the shield. There are forty-eight of these furrows on the front and thirty-five on the back, and all of them run along side by side with perfect regularity. The grooves are made by an implement which consists simply of a small sharp-edged flint, set into a little lump of porcupine-grass resin attached to one end of a straight or curved stick. The flint has a convex edge and, when in use, the implement is grasped close to the end to which the flint is attached, so that the native can both take advantage of its whole weight, and at the same time accurately direct his blows, with the result that he ornaments the surface with close-set grooves that correspond in shape with the sharp convex edge of the flint.

At one spot we crossed a low range and, far away on the northern horizon, could just see the outline of Central Mount Stuart, which marks the very centre of the continent. Away to the east we could see another hill, once appropriately called Mount Lonely but now known as Mount Winnecke. Its native name is Irritchapuncha, which means eagle-hawk mountain, and is associated with an old tradition according to which two eagle-hawk men, or men-birds, lived there in the Alcheringa with a lot of young eagle-hawks. They fed on wallabies, and one day one of the men choked himself with a bone which stuck crossways in his throat so that he died. The other man and the young ones flew round about for some days, but finally they all died and went into the ground. Their spirit parts remained, haunting the spot, and now they are continually being re-incarnated in the form of eagle-hawk men and women.

Travelling on we came to our camping ground by the side of Woodforde Creek. There was no surface water, but in the sandy bed of the creek there was what is

called a "soakage," that is a spot at which, by digging down a short distance, water can be obtained. Our black boy set to work with a shovel and soon scooped out a hole into which water gradually trickled until there was enough to supply ourselves and the horses, of which we had twelve with us, the remaining eight forming the wagon team.

Two days later we camped by the Hanson Creek, close to the foot of Central Mount Stuart, which owes its name, first to the fact that it marks the very centre of the continent, and second to its having been discovered by MacDouall Stuart, during the first of his expeditions.[1] The so-called mountain is really a group of hills, the highest point of which is 2500 feet above sea level but only 800 feet above the plain from which they rise (Fig. 155). On the summit of the highest hill, nearly fifty years ago, Stuart, the first white man to penetrate the lonely scrub in the centre of the continent, built a cairn of stones beneath which he placed a bottle containing papers and above which he left the Union Jack flying. The meaning of the latter must have been a mystery to the natives, but fortunately they left the cairn untouched, probably because they thought that it was associated with magic of some kind and were too frightened to interfere with it. Many years later, when the route for the overland telegraph line was being surveyed, the papers were discovered and sent down to Adelaide. It was on this spot that the northern and southern sections of the telegraph line, which had been separately constructed, were linked

[1] In *Explorations in Australia: Journals during the Years* 1858, &c., 1864, p. 165, a sketch of the mountain is given. This, like most of the views reproduced in the book, is rather fanciful and represents the mountain as being much more imposing than it is in reality. The same remark applies to the sketch of the hills in the vicinity of Attack Creek.

together so that for the first time Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney were placed in telegraphic communication with the old world. In those days the line consisted of a single iron wire, carried by wooden poles, and, for many years, Australia depended entirely on this one wire for all intercourse by telegraph with the outside world. In 1900 the wooden poles, which were liable to destruction by white ants, were replaced by iron ones, a copper wire was added and the quadruplex system was installed. We celebrated our arrival at the centre of the continent by a sumptuous evening meal consisting of roast wild turkey, scientifically known as *Eupodotis australis*, followed by one of Chance's best plum doughs, and it was not long before we turned in for the night.

Our next camp was again on the banks of the Hanson River, and along its bed we found, to our surprise, that a sun-dew plant (Drosera) was growing quite freely. We were glad to see that the leaves were thickly covered with flies that they had captured with their sticky secretion. It was the only spot in which we came across this sun-dew, which is usually met with in much cooler and moister parts. On a gum tree close by the well there were a few old crows, and we shot one because we wanted to know what kind of crows there were in this part of the world. This one had brown eyes, whilst, in all those that we had yet seen, they were white. During the Horn Expedition Mr. Keartland noted the fact that in some parts, as at Hermannsburg, and at Heavitree Gap, in the Macdonnell Ranges, the crows had hazel-coloured eyes; whilst further south, in the Stevenson River country, brown and white-eyed crows are found together. Wherever you camp the crows are sure to find you out, and their harsh cawing, as they fly about or perch on the trees, waiting for any refuse that may be thrown away

in the camp, seems to accord well with the dreariness of the surroundings.

Late in the afternoon we had a slight shower of rain, and the air was very heavy and oppressive. Till far on in the evening the flies remained, crawling lazily over us after we settled down for the night. As a general rule, they cease from troubling after sunset, when the mosquitoes commence operations. About ten o'clock a heavy wind arose, which, though it was warm and uncomfortable, at least blew the flies away. We were not sorry when the dawn appeared and we started off early on our track towards the Foster Range, which we could see rising away to the north. Early in the afternoon we camped at its base, by the side of a good waterhole in the Stirling Creek. To our great disappointment we had not met a single native since leaving Alice Springs. There were traces of them around the waterholes, but probably they had all gone into their camp near Barrow Creek.

There were a few bean trees about (*Erythrina vespertilio*), but the drought had seriously affected them and they were not fruiting well. The pods were few and far between and, in this part of the country at least, the supply of red beans was very limited. They are usually present in large quantities and the women gather them when they fall to the ground, bore them through with a fire-stick and, stringing them together, wear coils of them as necklaces, the rich red colour of the beans harmonising well with their deep chocolate-coloured skin. Unfortunately, when exposed to light for any length of time, the red fades into a dull brown. On the banks of the waterhole there were a large number of small burrows, which to our surprise, for we were not expecting to find such an animal in the dry Centre of Australia, contained true crabs. The crayfish has accommodated itself to all

kinds of natural surroundings in Australia, but as a general rule crabs do not go far away from salt water, certainly not into arid regions such as this. The particular species that we found belongs to a family (Thelphusidæ) some of the members of which have become adapted to fresh water, and we were much surprised to find that the crab inhabiting the waterholes in the Centre of Australia was identical with one that is met with at Cape York and Thursday Island. It would be impossible for it now to spread across the wide belt of dry and arid country separating the Centre from the coastal regions, and the present inhabitants of these scattered waterholes must either be descendants of ancestors who came in from the coast, when climatic conditions were more favourable and when the country was crossed by permanent streams of water, up which they gradually made their way from the coast; or else they are the descendants of ancestors who lived upon the shores of the old inland sea which once stretched across what is now the dry centre of the continent. Here also we met with the large water-holding frog (*Chiroleptes platycephalus*), which is common further south, and also with another (*Notaden bennetti*), which is not found on the southern steppes and had not previously been reported from Central Australia, though it is well known in parts of New South Wales. It is popularly known as the Catholic Toad, because of a peculiar cross-like light-coloured mark on its back, and we were interested to find that it had adopted the habit of swelling its body out with water so as to tide over a period of drought.

The next day we rode slowly up the southern face of the Foster Range, which consisted of a series of flat-topped hills quite bleak and bare, save for tussocks of

porcupine grass and a few mulgas and Hakeas. Even these hardy plants were stunted, for in summer they are exposed to intense heat and in winter to the south-east winds which blow bitterly over the hills. It was mid-winter when we crossed and the wind was blowing strongly; but, though decidedly chilly, we enjoyed it, partly because it was fresh and bracing, but, more still, because it meant that for a time we were free from flies. From the top, looking southwards, we could see away to Central Mount Stuart, which stood out in the far distance above the great level plain. To the north we looked across another plain hemmed in by flat-topped hills cut through, here and there, by valleys formed by streams that ran in olden days. The hills are composed of a granitic rock which forms their main mass and are capped by horizontal sandstone and grit, which wear away so as to leave a bold escarpment, often rising straight above the more gradual slope of the granite rocks (Fig. 156).

The descent from the Foster Range was rather a sharp one, the track very rough and rocky, with a nasty sudden turn in the middle of it, over which it would be an easy matter to capsize and roll two hundred feet down into the valley beneath. However, the wagon with our stores —about the safety of which we were a little anxious— got down without any mishap, and we were soon at the station, where we were warmly welcomed by our old friend Mr. Scott, the officer in charge. We made our camp close to the telegraph station, and found to our satisfaction that a considerable number of natives, who had heard of our coming, were in camp and that other parties were expected shortly. The station itself is picturesquely situated at the base of a long line of scarped hills near the gap through which the creek runs (Fig. 157). When we arrived everything was as dry and parched

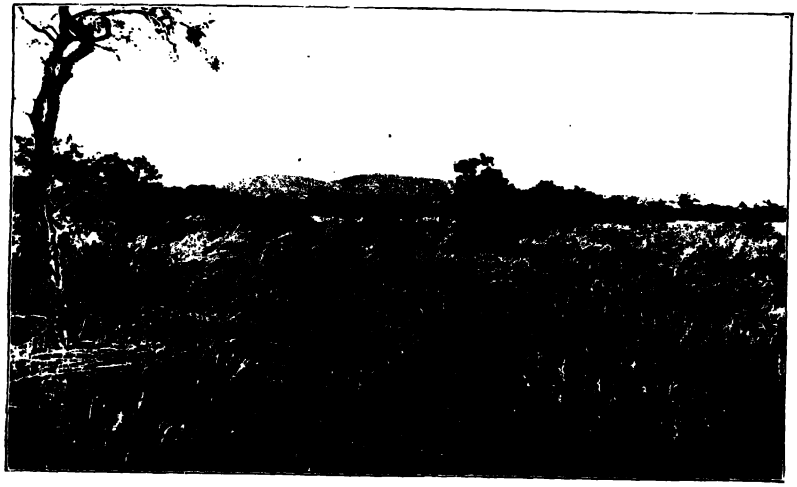


Fig. 155. CENTRAL MOUNT STUART (p. 312).

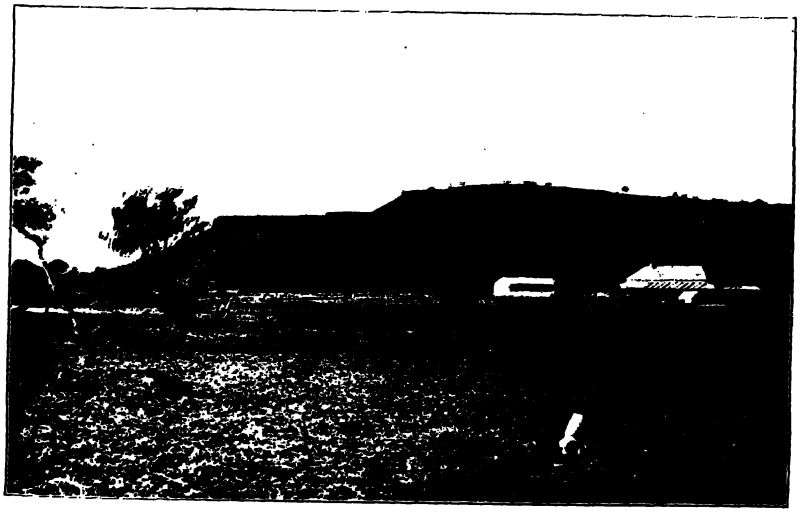


Fig. 156. BARROW CREEK STATION, WITH THE SCARPED HILLS BEHIND.

as the Centre usually is, but very soon after our arrival the clouds, which had been threatening for days, thickened and the rain came down in torrents. The hills were hidden in mist, and for hours we heard the welcome sound of rain beating heavily on the roof of the station. After a time there was a thin white line of water trickling down the creek, which gradually broadened until the whole bed was full. This only lasted for a few hours and then it rapidly dried up, and all that remained next morning were a few pools of water amongst the gum trees. Two days later everything was as dry as usual. We hoped that the rain would bring large numbers of animals out of their retreat, as it generally does in these dry regions, but it did not do so, and it was evident that the long drought had been very disastrous to all kinds of animal life.

CHAPTER XIII

BARROW CREEK AND THE KAITISH AND UNMATJERA TRIBES

BARROW CREEK was our central station amongst the Kaitish tribe, and we were soon at work amongst the natives, who sent out messengers to bring in as many of the tribes as could be gathered together. The day after our arrival we unpacked our stores of knives, tomahawks, looking-glasses, bead necklets and pipes, and displayed them before a deputation of the natives, with the result that they at once returned to their camps and spread the news amongst the others. In a very short time we were busily engaged, bartering our goods in exchange for native things. A stick of tobacco or a single-bladed knife readily purchased a shield, spear or pitchi. Half a stick was quite enough for a boomerang or a bunch of neck or arm ringlets.

Knives and hatchets were most in request, but these were only given in exchange for something really good, or to secure the goodwill of some old man whose sympathy we wanted to enlist. The oldest man amongst them, who was evidently much looked up to by the others and whose native name was Tungulla, we attached to our staff. His remuneration consisted of three meals daily, and a liberal supply of tobacco.

Barrow Creek station was opened in 1872, when the southern and northern sections of the overland telegraph



Fig. 157. BARROW CREEK STATION.



Fig. 158. ROCKY GORGE, IMMEDIATELY BEHIND BARROW CREEK STATION, IN WHICH THE NATIVES SECRETED THEMSELVES BEFORE ATTACKING THE STATION.

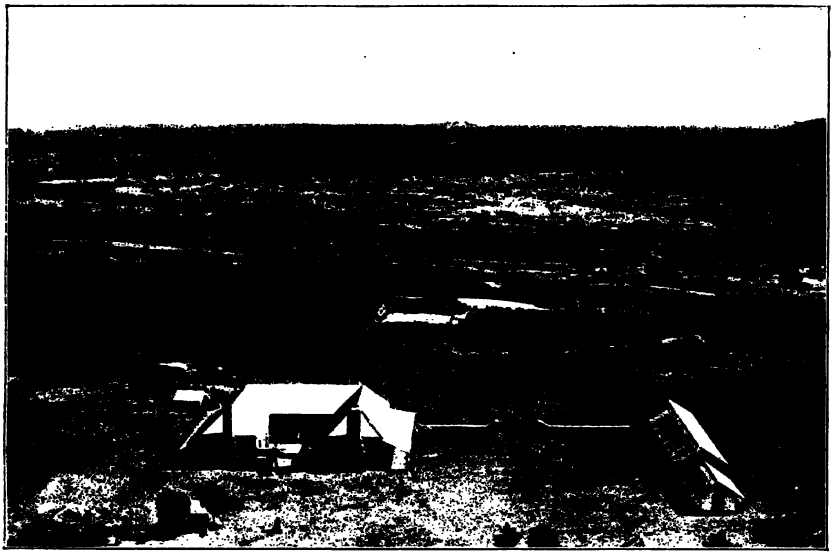


Fig. 159. BARROW CREEK STATION.
The photograph is taken looking south from the hill behind the station. When it was attacked the officers were seated in front where a small tree can be seen, and had to run round to the back to enter the courtyard. The natives were grouped in the position occupied by the rain gauge.



Fig. 160. PERFORMANCE OF A CEREMONY OF THE EMU TOTEM, KAITISH TRIBE (p. 322).

line were joined together at this spot. In February 1874 it was the scene of a treacherous attack by the natives, amongst whom was our friend Tungulla—then a young man. In those early days of the overland telegraph line, the natives were liable to be troublesome, and as a precaution against attack every station was built in the form of a square, with a central courtyard on to which all the rooms opened. The only entrance was on one side of the square, and it could be closed by means of strong doors. The windows were provided with iron bars, and at intervals there were loop-holes in the walls through which, if necessary, the natives could be fired at. At the time in question there was no idea of immediate danger from the blacks. They had always been treated kindly by the officers of the station and in no way interfered with; and in the quiet summer's evening the seven white men then living at the station were seated in the open, listening to one of their number who was playing on a violin. Foolishly, as it turned out, not one of them was armed, and they did not notice that, by twos and threes, the blacks were coming down from a gorge in which they had been hiding (Fig. 158), dragging their spears, as the natives will do, between their toes along the ground, so as to give the appearance of being unarmed. A score or more of them were collected, close to the entrance of the courtyard, hidden from the view of the white men by the corner of the station building, before the station officers had the slightest idea of their perilous position (Fig. 159). Indeed the first intimation that they had of any danger was a sudden yell from the natives, followed by a shower of spears. They could do nothing but make a sudden rush for the courtyard gate amidst the spears and boomerangs, hurled at them from close quarters. Fortunately, one friendly black boy, employed about the station, was in a small

hut close by, and seizing his revolver he immediately fired upon the natives. This served to disconcert them slightly, but, even so, it was wonderful that any of the men reached the yard in safety. The station-master fell, mortally wounded, just within the gates ; the cook fell dead, with a spear through his breast, while one of the assistants tripped over a stone at the entrance and was speared through the leg. As soon as they were in the yard the gates were closed, leaving however the friendly black boy outside. After firing his revolver he ran round to the front of the station, and though he was pursued by the natives and narrowly escaped being hit by their boomerangs, was dragged in through one of the loopholes, which, fortunately for him, was larger than the rest. Once inside they were secure, and the natives rapidly retired to a safe distance. Everything that was possible, with the limited means at their disposal, was done to try to save the life of the station-master ; but the barbed spear had entered too deeply and he gradually sank and died, not, however, before he had been able to speak along the line to his wife in Adelaide. Strangely enough, it was one of our small party who, at the moment, was at the instrument, twelve hundred miles away to the south, and received the message from the dying man. In the crowded and busy room of the General Post Office at Adelaide, with dozens of machines incessantly ticking out their messages to and from all parts of Australia, the wife spoke to her husband far away in the centre. In the Barrow Creek station, where he lay dying, there was perfect silence save for the ticking of the one machine as it received the message from Adelaide and sent back the last farewell of the expiring man.

Very fortunately it did not occur to the natives to destroy the line, and no sooner was everything made safe

than word of what had happened was sent along it; and then, from Tennant Creek in the north and from Alice Springs in the south, the few white men who could be spared rode with all haste towards Barrow Creek. One can imagine their feelings as they urged the horses on day and night. Meanwhile the natives had retired to the other side of the creek, where their camp fires could be seen amongst the scrub, not far away. The two men were buried by their comrades close to the station, one of the five who were left pacing backwards and forwards, with loaded rifle, while the burial service was being read, between the small party around the grave and the natives who were watching them from the creek. It was not long before help came—one party from the north riding one hundred and twenty miles in less than twenty-four hours, a wonderful feat both for men and beasts over country such as they had to cross—and then, when the station was made safe, they rode out over all the surrounding country, and the natives had such a lesson that they never again attempted an attack. This was the only occasion on which the natives behaved treacherously to the white men connected with the telegraph line. It is quite possible that, in these early days of intercourse with strangers, they mistook forbearance and kindness for a sign of weakness; but they found out their mistake, and from that day to this the telegraph officials in Central Australia have had no trouble with the natives —indeed the latter very soon came to regard the former as their friends. At the present day the courtyard at Barrow Creek is open day and night, and the rooms all open on to the verandah. The loopholes in the walls remain, but they serve only for ventilation.

The old man Tungulla, whom we had attached to our staff, was well advanced in years and mild in manners;

but in his early days he was a great warrior, and told us how, after the attack on the station, in which he had taken part, he was seen and chased by the avenging party and just managed to save his life by hiding in a crevice in the rocks, in which, hidden from view by tussocks of porcupine-grass, he lay shivering with fear, as the white men passed by within a few yards of him. It was twenty-five years since this happened, and for our own sakes we were glad that the old rascal had not been shot, though he richly deserved it. He turned out to be a store-house of native lore, and knew all that there was to be known about the Kaitish tribe. The customs and traditions of the latter are closely similar to those of the Arunta. Tungulla belonged to a grass-seed totem and, out in a secluded spot in the scrub, he and other old men performed some of their sacred ceremonies. Amongst the Arunta tribe ceremonies belonging to different totems are never performed on the same spot or in rapid succession, but to our surprise we saw at Barrow Creek emu, grass-seed, water and other ceremonies performed one after the other in spots separated by only a few yards (Figs. 160, 161). Tungulla had his body decorated with a broad band of red down edged with white that ran right over his head and down his back and chest. This represented uncooked seed, while red, circular patches of down, edged with white, on his chest and back stood for cooked seed—made into flat cakes. In all important points the ceremonies were closely similar to those of the Arunta, but there was no running round and shouting "Wha! Wha!" and each ceremony came to a very characteristic close as seen in Fig. 163.

The head man of the rain totem also showed us one of his ceremonies in which a Nurtunja was used. We had often seen this in the Arunta ceremonies, but amongst

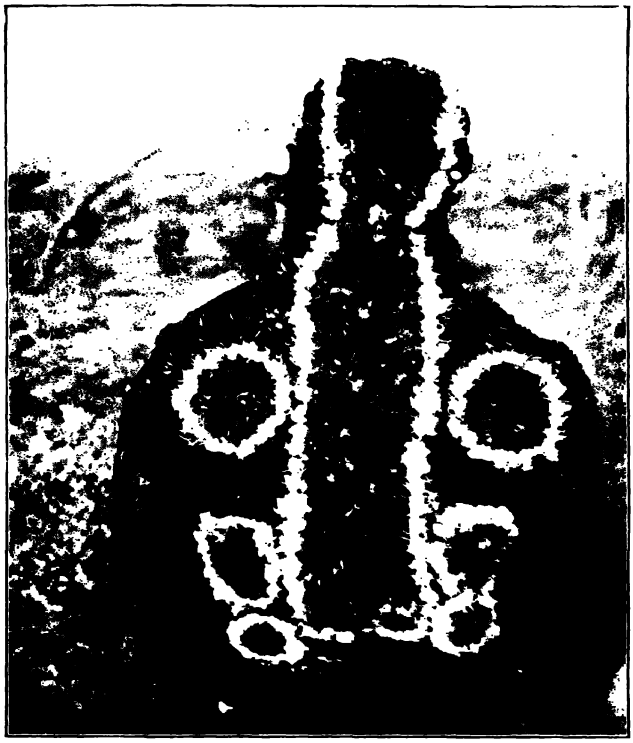


Fig. 161. DECORATION OF PERFORMER IN CEREMONY OF A GRASS-SEED TOTEM, KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 162. TWO YOUNG GIRLS, KAITISH TRIBE (p. 324).



Fig 163. METHOD OF BRINGING A SACRED CEREMONY TO A CLOSE, KAITISH TRIBE.

the Kaitish tribe it is not much used and in the tribes further north it is quite unknown—indeed this was the last time that we saw it used. The rain-man was of course supposed to be responsible for the water supply, and as Barrow Creek is situated in the very heart of the continent, where the rainfall is very precarious and uncertain, he was a man of considerable importance. He was not particularly friendly to the white man, and a year or two before our visit, during a long drought, he told the natives that he did not intend to allow any more rain to fall until the drought had killed off all the white men and their cattle, so that the blacks could have the country to themselves once more. He did not seem to realise that if the white men were killed off, the natives would also have a very bad time. He either relented, or else something that he had not calculated upon happened, because a heavy rain fell shortly afterwards so that neither the white men nor their cattle perished—in fact it was the old men and women amongst the natives who suffered most, such as were within reach of the telegraph station owing their lives to the kindness of the white men. When the rain did come, however, he took all the credit for it.

This same rain-man told us the history of his old ancestor in the Alcheringa. He arose in the form of a little blackfellow, of course at a waterhole. At first, like very young piccaninnies nowadays, he was reddish, but as he lay out in the sunshine he turned black. By some means he split into two, so that then there was an elder and a younger brother. Gradually they grew into big men and then started off on their wanderings, the full account of which, with the most minute details, occupied the whole of one afternoon in the relating. At the end of their journey, however, they mounted a

hill—one of those in the Foster Range, not far from the station which forms the gathering ground for the Barrow Creek—sat down and gravely stroked their whiskers, out of which two euros (kangaroos) came. This is why the rain men now wear a euro tooth as an ornament, hanging down over their ears, for henceforth the euros were the friends and mates of the rain-men. Once more they stroked their whiskers, and floods of water came out of them and spread over the country far and wide, though they were careful not to let the water go out of their sight, as they sat on the hill top. As night came on they drew it all back, setting it free once more in the morning. At last they died on the hill top, but before this they cut off their whiskers, from which the clouds sprang and then went up into the sky. From the clouds the rainbow arose, and now it is the latter which is always trying to prevent the rain from falling. These and many other things the old rain-man told us, entering into the most minute details with keen relish.

At Barrow Creek we came into contact with two tribes, called respectively the Kaitish and Unmatjera. Both of them were small ones, and both of them closely similar in their physical features, organisation and customs to the Arunta (Figs. 162, 164, 172). The Unmatjera dialect is very similar to that of the Arunta; indeed it is doubtful if the former is really a distinct tribe or a northern group of the Arunta, with certain local peculiarities due to its contact with the Kaitish. The latter is a distinct tribe, with a dialect different from that of the Unmatjera and Arunta on the south and still more different from that of the Warrumunga on the north. The Arunta, Unmatjera, Kaitish and Ilpirra can be naturally grouped together to form one large "nation" occupying all the country from the Macumba River in the south to the Bonney Creek



Fig. 164. YOUNG GIRL, KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 165. YOUNG WOMAN WEARING HEAD AND NECK-BANDS, KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 166. WOMAN CARRYING PITCHI, SIDE FACE, KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 167. ELDERLY WOMAN, SIDE FACE. KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 169. MAN OF THE KAITISH TRIBE. Showing the curly nature of the hair.



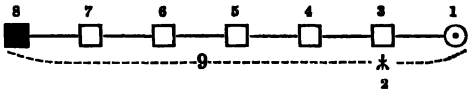
Fig. 168. ELDERLY WOMAN, FULL FACE, KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 170. YOUNG MAN OF THE UNMATJERA TRIBE, SIDE FACE.

in the north, a distance of approximately six hundred and seventy miles.

When questioning Tungulla, the old Kaitish man, we used to have one of our boys to assist us. Tungulla himself knew a good deal of the Arunta dialect and Jim, or Erlikilliaka, to give him his native name, knew a good deal of Kaitish. Our boy was immensely proud to help us, and as he noticed that we always took notes, evidently thought that it was the proper thing for him to do so too. Though he could not write a word, he always had a pencil and paper on which he made marks that much impressed Tungulla. His "notes" consisted of hieroglyphics such as the following, which, apart from the numbers that we have added, is an exact copy of one of them:—



1 represents a waterhole where a man, 2, came into existence in the Alcheringa: 3 is a big tree which rose to mark the spot close to the waterhole: one day the man walked away to the spot 3 and looked back and said, "I can see the water, it is close up yet;" then he walked on to 4, 5, and 6, each square indicating a resting-place, at which he made the same remark. At 7 he said, "That water long way off now," then he walked on to 8, much further away, and there he died, the black square indicating a tree in which his spirit now lives, though it often goes back to the original waterhole along the track marked 9. The narration reduced to this concise form sounds very commonplace; but each such narrative, though it may only recount how an old man walked over the country and finally died, occupies a long time in the

telling and is accompanied by much pantomimic representation of the actions of the old man—peering back with his hand shading his eyes to see if the waterhole was visible, or sitting down exhausted and breathing deeply after his hard trudge over the country. Each square indicates some natural feature such as a rock, large tree, or waterhole, that arose to mark the spot where the ancestor came to a halt. It is a very striking feature in regard to the beliefs of the tribes of Central Australia that they associate every prominent natural object with some episode in the life of one of their ancestors.

One day we were asking Tungulla questions about magic, in connection with some pointing sticks, called Atnilinga, which he had given us (Fig. 179). After a good deal of persuasion we induced him to show us how they were used. Our boy Erlikilliaka promptly retired to what he considered a safe distance, which was out of sight, and then Tungulla bent forward till his head was level with his knees and began to jerk the stick, time after time, backward between his legs, mumbling all the time a fierce incantation: "Ya pa il perta: ya pa il kari: ya kurti wali: yung wenti kari: ya pa alkari." When he had finished, the excitement, aided probably by a rush of blood to his head, evidently made him feel dizzy, and he declared that the evil magic had gone into him and that he felt, as he looked, very bad. It took some time to calm him down, but at length we assured him that, in our medicine chest, we had a plentiful supply of powerful magic that could effectually counteract the influence of evil magic far more potent than any that the pointing stick contained, and that he need have no fear. Magic is a very real thing to the savage. It was only after considerable persuasion that the old man had consented to show us how the poison stick was used.



Fig. 171. YOUNG MAN OF THE UNMATJERA TRIBE, FULL FACE.



Fig. 172. MAN OF THE UNMATJERA TRIBE.



Fig. 173. KNOCKING OUT TOOTH, KAITISH TRIBE (p. 332).

When once he had started he entered into the spirit of the thing, firmly believing, of course, that he was projecting the evil magic with which the stick was charged. On this occasion, there was no one into whom he was anxious to project the magic, and therefore when the performance was over and he felt dizzy, he naturally concluded that it had entered himself. As soon as he had recovered from his fright, we sent him away to his camp to have a quiet smoke. One day we were talking to him about the comet which was visible while we were at Alice Springs, and he gravely assured us, without the sign of a smile, that he had driven it away by means of his sacred stones. So long as it was visible he used to go out every night by himself, because no ordinary mortal might see the stones, and then he drew them out of his body and threw them at the comet, with the result that after much hard work, he succeeded in driving it away. When they had done their work the stones returned to his body. The natives firmly believed that this happened. They thought that the tail was an enormous bundle of spears which some evil power wished to throw at them, and that the comet and its spears only went away because our friend was stronger in magic power than it was.

At Barrow Creek, with the aid of Mr. Scott, the officer in charge of the station, we spent a good deal of time collecting various animals. For two or three years previously the seasons had been excessively dry, with the result that all kinds of animals had suffered severely. There were plenty of Port Lincoln parrots to be had, and though they are not very rare, they were in such good plumage that we skinned a few of them. The general colour of their bodies is green, with a bluish tail and wings and a bright yellow ring round the neck. Their colour

seems to be brighter in these northern than in the southern parts of the country. The best bird, however, was a rather insignificant-looking little Xerophila with a body no bigger than that of a sparrow. Its back was cinnamon coloured, with darker wings and tail, and a white breast, crossed by a narrow black band. We had first found this bird six years earlier, during the Horn Expedition, on the Missionary Plains lying to the south of the Macdonnell Ranges. That was the first occasion on which it had been met with, and then only three specimens were secured, so we were much interested in finding it at Barrow Creek, two hundred miles further north. It was by no means plentiful, but was flying about in companies of two or three. The black band across its chest distinguishes it from a closely-allied species with a cinnamon-brown band that occurs at Port Augusta, and we were glad to secure a few more specimens, as it only inhabits parts of the continent which are more or less inaccessible.

The old women used to bring their captures into the telegraph station late in the afternoon, often after they had been out a day or two. It was always a very curious collection that was emptied out of sundry old jam tins, pickle bottles or bags of all kinds and sizes, made out of white men's discarded socks, coat sleeves, trouser legs or anything that could serve as a receptacle. Each collector in turn emptied out her tin, bottle, or bag, revealing a strange mixture of dead mice and bandicoots, with a sprinkling of very lively beetles, scorpions and centipedes, and sometimes a snake, though the latter was always decidedly dead. As the women are always accompanied by the children, who are keenly interested in collecting, it can easily be imagined that the final securing, and transference to our collecting bottles, of such a hetero-

geneous assemblage of animals of all kinds after it had been let loose on the verandah of the telegraph station, was a lively scene.

After the first day or two we had to intimate to the collectors that we did not want more than a certain number of the common things, and that the ordinary beetles, scorpions, mice and rats had no market value so far as tea, sugar, tobacco, or, in the case of children, dates and sweets were concerned.

The only mammal of any value that the women brought in was the rabbit bandicoot (*Peragale lagotis*). It has very little resemblance to a rabbit, save in the size of its ears, which are nearly naked and semi-transparent, so that the blood gives them a pinkish tinge. The general colour of its beautifully soft, silky fur is grey on the back and on the outer side of the limbs, and white underneath. For some reason the natives have taken a great fancy to its tail, which, in large specimens, reaches a length of ten or twelve inches. The basal part is grey in colour, the middle black, and the last third pure white, with a prominent crest. It is the white tip that the natives like. Instead of simply cutting it off, they make a spiral incision through the skin, round and round the tail, so that when it is removed from the underlying bone, the narrow band of skin, with the long white hairs attached to it, coils up and forms a symmetrically shaped brush, or tassel, of white hairs. As some of their ornaments consist of large numbers of these brushes, which they call alpita, and as almost every native possesses them, it is evident both that the rabbit bandicoot is much in request and that, in order to supply the demand, it must exist in large quantities. In many parts, where the ground was loose enough for its burrows, it was covered with endless low mounds, composed of the

sandy soil thrown out by the animal; but as the latter is nocturnal, it is seldom seen. This ordinary species is *Peragale lagotis*. A second species, *Peragale leucura*, smaller in size and lighter in colour, with a tail uniformly white, save on the upper surface of the last third of its length, is known only from one specimen preserved in the British Museum. Mr. P. M. Byrne, the officer in charge at Charlotte Waters telegraph station, made careful enquiries amongst the natives in regard to the various species of Peragale. The common form was, of course, well known to them, but he could get no definite information with regard to the smaller, light-coloured species. The former was called Urgatta, and in addition to this, he discovered that they had a distinct name, Urpila, for what was evidently a second species, though not the one known scientifically as *Peragale leucura*. This new form which Mr. Byrne succeeded in securing—the Urpila of the natives—was only rarely found. It is decidedly smaller than the Urgatta, and much darker in colour, with the white crest on the tail tip less conspicuous. Both the Urgatta and the Urpila are nocturnal, burrowing animals, but their habits differ slightly. The natives told Mr. Byrne that the Urgatta always occupies a small chamber at the end of its burrow; the Urpila only uses the inner chamber during the summer. During the cold weather he lies within a foot or two of the entrance, so that the natives catch him by springing on the ground a short distance back from the end of the burrow, thus cutting off his retreat to the inner chamber. A second native waits at the opening of the burrow and catches him as he runs out. The Urgatta has to be dug right out, and in many places we saw large areas of ground that had been turned over by the natives in search of the animal.

At Barrow Creek, we noticed amongst the Kaitish tribe, just as at Alice Springs amongst the Arunta, that some of the men and women had one of their front teeth knocked out, while others had not. In some parts of Australia the main feature of the initiation ceremony of the young men consists in this knocking out of a front tooth, and then, of course, it is obligatory upon every male member of the tribe and no woman is allowed to have a tooth removed. In the Centre of Australia this forms only one part of the initiatory ceremony, but it is such a curious custom that its existence naturally suggests the idea that at one time amongst the Central tribes it had some special meaning which is now quite lost. The natives, of course, have a myth to explain it, but it is a very lame one. Tungulla told us that, in the Alcheringa, two snakes came into existence at a waterhole. After a time, and apparently for no special reason, the younger one suggested that each of them should pull out one of his front teeth. Accordingly they did so, and then sat down and looked at one another, and remarked that they looked very well with their teeth out. After a time they died, and then it occurred to some blackfellows living in the neighbourhood, who were very frightened of the snakes, that it would be a good thing to imitate them, so they decided to do so. Since then many of their descendants have done the same, though it is by no means obligatory. The women have also been allowed to adopt the custom, which at once shows that it has now no special significance.

We were anxious to see the actual operation, and as there were two girls of suitable age, the elder women readily fell in with our suggestion that it would be a good thing to knock their teeth out. Accordingly one morning we went to the creek, where the sand was soft for the

patient to lie upon. A hole was made in the sand, just big enough to place the girl's head in—this was always done in the Alcheringa, so of course it was necessary to do it now (Fig. 173). First of all the gum was loosened by pressure with a pointed stick. This done, the point of the stick was placed on the tooth and, after two or three sharp knocks with a stone, out it came. The operator then handed the tooth to the girl, and took hold of her arms from behind. After the two had danced about quaintly for half a minute, she released the arms of the girl, who then threw the tooth away as far as she could in the direction in which her mother was supposed to have lived in the Alcheringa. We searched hard for that tooth, when there was no one looking, but could never find it. At a later time we also saw a man's tooth knocked out, the operation being conducted in just the same way as in the case of the girl (Fig. 174).

We had the good fortune to come across an old and learned member of the Unmatjera tribe, which inhabits the country round about Central Mount Stuart. His name was Ulpailiurkna, and he told us a good deal about them, and amongst other things a curious tradition with regard to two individuals whom they call Oruncha. The same name is used by the Arunta and is applied to a number of mythical, ogre-like creatures of a mischievous and malevolent nature. They are supposed to inhabit the earth at certain special places, all of which are known to the natives, who will not go near them if they can avoid doing so, especially after dark. These two Orunchas were brothers. One day the elder started off after an old kangaroo, but, as he chased it, the rain came down in torrents and both of them got bogged in soft ground. As soon as ever the Oruncha lifted one leg out, down went the other deeper than ever, and it took



Fig. 174. KNOCKING OUT TOOTH, KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 175. MEDICINE MAN SHOWING THE HOLE MADE IN HIS TONGUE (p. 335).

him a long time and a hard struggle before he could get on to dry ground. When he did so he found that the kangaroo had gone further on, and, a little way ahead, there was a man called Induda, who was out hunting with his dog named Pilprina, and this man killed the kangaroo. The Oruncha came up just as he was getting ready to cook the kangaroo and was very much annoyed, but did not let Induda see that he was, and only said "Hallo, you've killed my kangaroo." Induda replied "Yes, I know I have," which annoyed the Oruncha still more, so he called the dog over and killed him with his yam stick. Then Induda got angry, and the two began to fight. Induda could not understand what was the matter, because every time that he got a big blow fairly planted on the Oruncha's head, it had no effect. The Oruncha simply sank into the ground and came up, smiling, a little way off. Finally, when he had had enough fighting, the Oruncha smote Induda under the ribs, killed him, took his insides out and ate them, and then did the same with the dog. Then, at his leisure, he smoke-dried both their bodies and that of the kangaroo, and hung them up on a tree to wait until he wanted to eat them. Then he returned home to tell his younger brother what he had done, and, when he got into camp, he sent him back to bring in the bodies, one by one, so that they could have a good feast. However, Induda's friends tracked him up, and found the two Orunchas in their camp. They attacked them and tried to kill them, but as soon as ever their spears went straight at the Orunchas, down the latter dived into the ground and came up some way off, jeering at the men and telling them all to come on and try again. At last two of the men hit upon the plan of hiding behind a bush, and by good luck the Orunchas came close up with their backs turned towards them, so

the men promptly ran their spears through them and then went on their way, thinking they were dead. However, they did not know that the Orunchas' hearts had jumped out on to the ground; and they could not, for the life of them, make out what was the noise that they heard behind them. It was the two hearts growling away as hard as they could, because they were very annoyed. The men came back and put a lot more spears into the bodies, and then started off again with the same result. This happened three times, and then the men began to wonder whatever was the matter, and two of them waited and hid behind a bush. As soon as the men had gone on the hearts started growling again, thinking that no one was there. This time they were mistaken. The men speared the hearts through and through, and that was the last of those particular Orunchas, who ceased from troubling the blackfellows in that part of the country. In some places Orunchas are still alive and apt to trouble the natives, who laugh at them during the day-time but take good care, if they happen to be roaming about at night-time, to give their home a wide berth.

Amongst the Orunchas there are some who are not altogether malevolent, but are supposed to be especially concerned with the making of medicine men. In the Kaitish, Arunta, Unmatjera, and Ilpirra tribes, if a man feels that he has received a call to the medical profession, he betakes himself to some secluded spot, known to be frequented by one of these special spirit individuals; or perhaps, without intending to do so, he may come across one in some lonely part of the scrub. In the Arunta tribe three distinct schools of medicine men are recognised (1) those made by the Iruntarinia or spirits, (2) those made by the Oruncha, who are really only a special kind of spirits of a mischievous nature, and (3) those made by

other medicine men. The two first are more highly thought of than the third; indeed they stand to the latter in much the same relative position as, amongst us, medicine men who have taken a degree do to those who only hold a licentiate. The method of graduation, as conducted by the Iruntarinia, is as follows. About fourteen miles to the south of the Alice Springs station there is a shallow cave, called Okalpara, in a range of hills bounding the southern margin of what is now called the Emily Plain. This cave is inhabited by the Iruntarinia, and the would-be medicine man, taking care that no one sees him wander away from the camp, and with considerable trepidation, lies down to sleep at the mouth of the cave. He must not go inside; if he did he would anger the Iruntarinia and be spirited away for ever. At break of day one of the Iruntarinia comes to the mouth of the cave and throws an invisible lance at the man which pierces his neck from behind and comes out, making a large hole in his tongue. How this is actually made we do not know, but every true Railtchawa, or medicine man, has his tongue pierced. Possibly he may do this himself, but naturally he never admits that this is so, and in course of time he might quite easily come to believe that the hole was made by the Iruntarinia (Fig. 175). A second lance pierces the head from side to side, killing the victim, who is then carried into the cave, which is supposed to extend many miles under the plain. His internal organs are removed and he is provided with a new set, and shortly afterwards comes to life again. He is perfectly dazed and silly and does not know where he is, or what has been done to him, but the Iruntarinia, who is invisible save to certain highly gifted medicine men and to the camp dogs, leads him back to his people. For several days the man remains more or less strange in his appearance and

behaviour, until, one morning, he appears with a broad band of powdered charcoal and fat across the bridge of his nose, and it is at once recognised that a new medicine man has graduated. He must not, however, according to the strict etiquette of his profession, engage in practice for about a year; and if, during this time, the hole in his tongue closes, as it sometimes does, then he knows that his virtues as a medicine man have departed. Meanwhile he cultivates the acquaintance of other medicine men, learning from them the secrets of the craft, which consist, principally, in the ability to hide about his person, and to produce at will, small quartz pebbles or bits of stick and bone, and, what is hardly of less importance than the sleight of hand, the power of looking preternaturally solemn, as if he were the possessor of knowledge quite hidden from ordinary men. The Iruntarinia not only provide him with new insides, but they implant in his body a supply of small magic stones, called Atnongara, which he can project into the body of a patient, in whom they combat the evil influences at work within him. In modern language the medicine man is made able to inject an anti-toxin.

So long as these stones remain in his body he is capable of performing the work of a medicine man, but sometimes they are withdrawn, in which case they are supposed to return to the Iruntarinia from whom they originally came. With their departure, the man recognises that his power has also departed, and he retires from the profession. There are certain foods which the medicine man must abstain from. He may not eat fat or warm meat, neither must he inhale the smoke from burning bones nor go near to the nest of the large "bull-dog" ant (a species of Myrmecia), because if he were bitten by one of these, his medical powers would depart from him for

ever. At Barrow Creek there was an erstwhile medicine man who had become disqualified as a practitioner, simply because he had, inadvertently, taken a drink of hot tea.

The method of initiation into the profession, as conducted by a medicine man, is naturally very different from that of the Iruntarinia. A young man belonging to a group of natives on the Upper Finke River described to us the way in which he had been initiated by two old men, one of whom had been initiated by the Iruntarinia and the other by an Oruncha. Early one morning the old medicine men took him away to a secluded spot amongst the ranges. First of all they made him stand straight up with his hands clasped behind his head, and told him that, whatever happened, he was to maintain perfect silence. They then withdrew from their bodies a number of small, clear crystals, or Atnongara stones, which were placed, one by one, as they were extracted, in the hollow of a spear-thrower. When they had a sufficient number, each of them took hold of one of his legs, and gripping the stones firmly, pressed them slowly and strongly along the front of his leg and then up the body as high as the breast bone. This was repeated three times, the skin being scored with scratches from which blood flowed. The magic crystals were thereby supposed to be forced into his body, after which he was told to lie down, at full length, on his back. The medicine men then went a little distance away, and striking an attitude, pretended to project some of the crystals into his head. When this was over they came up again and repeated the scoring process over the legs and abdomen, and treated the arms in the same way, after which, to ensure that some of the magic stones entered his head, each of them pressed a crystal against his scalp and struck it hard. The next operation must have been painful.

One of the medicine men took a "pointing stick," which was itself full of magic, and, after tying some hair string round the middle joint of the first finger of the man's right hand, he forced the point under the nail for a considerable distance into the flesh, into which he pretended to press another crystal. The man was then made to keep his finger pressed against the hole, to prevent the stone from coming out, after which he was told to remain perfectly quiet and go to sleep. The scoring was repeated in the middle of the day and again in the evening, after which he was given meat to eat and water to drink, which actually contained small stones that he swallowed. On the second day and on the third also the same process was repeated, and on the latter he was told to stand up with his hands behind his head and to put his tongue out. As he did this, one of the medicine men withdrew from his skull, just behind his ear, a thin sharp stone—one of the Atnongara—and, taking some dust from the ground, dried the man's tongue, and then, pulling it out as far as possible, made a cut through it, about half an inch in length. After a short rest the medicine man who had been initiated by an Oruncha rubbed his body over with grease and then, placing him on the ground on his back, proceeded to paint a special design on his chest, abdomen and forehead (Fig. 176). This design is called Marilla and is the sacred drawing of the Oruncha, the mark on the forehead representing what is called Orunchilcha, which means literally translated "the devil's hand," the Oruncha being the evil or at least the mischievous spirit of the Arunta. A long black line, down the centre of the drawing, on the body, represents the Oruncha himself, and the marks round it are supposed to be the magic crystals that he carries in his body. When the drawing was made the man's fur string bands were placed on his head, and leaves



Fig. 176. MEDICINE MAN MADE BY THE ORUNCHA, WITH THE ORUNCHA MARILLA, OR DESIGN OF THE ORUNCHA.

The drawing on the forehead is the Orunchilcha, and represents the Oruncha's hand.

of a gum tree were fixed so as to hang down from beneath them, partly hiding the drawing of the Oruncha's hand. He was then told that he must remain at the Ungunja, that is, the men's camp, and maintain strict silence until the wound in his tongue had healed. As he could not go out hunting, he was supplied with food by women who stood to him in the tribal relationship of mother, wife and elder but not younger sister. The treatment to which he had been subjected left him really in a very weak state, but, when he had recovered, the medicine men told him that he might go back to his own camp.

In case of sickness the natives have implicit trust in the medicine man, and in serious cases two or three, if they are available, are called in, in consultation. No reward of any kind is given or expected. If the patient is cured, then the reputation of the medicine man is enhanced ; but if not, the failure is put down to the malignant action of superior magic, exerted by some hostile spirit or individual, though it is sometimes said, as we have heard on different occasions, that if a particular medicine man had been present he would have been able to counteract the influence of the enemy. Just as amongst ourselves, certain medicine men are regarded as better qualified and more able than others.

In ordinary cases the patient lies down, while the medicine man bends over him and sucks vigorously at the part of the body affected, spitting out every now and then pieces of wood, bone or stone, the presence of which is believed to be causing the injury and pain. This suction is one of the most characteristic features of native medical treatment, as pain in any part of the body is always attributed to the presence of some foreign body that must be removed. Among the western Arunta, especially, the medicine man, in addition to the

Atnongara stones, is supposed to have a particular kind of lizard distributed through his body which endows him with great suctorial powers, such as the natives attribute to the lizard itself. In serious cases the action is often very dramatic, and the medicine man needs a clear space in which to perform. The patient, perhaps too ill to sit up, is supported by some individual, while a distinguished medicine man, who has been called in and may have come a long distance, gravely examines him and consults with any local practitioners who may be present, and with the more immediate relatives of the patient, as to the nature of the illness. The diagnosis always occupies some time, during which every one maintains a very solemn appearance, all conversation being carried on in whispers. As a result the medicine man will perhaps decide that the sick man is suffering from a charmed bone inserted by a magic individual, such as a Kurdaitcha; or perhaps, worse still, the verdict is that one of the Iruntarinia has placed in his body an Ullinka, or short barbed stick attached to an invisible string, the pulling of which by the malicious spirit causes great pain. If such be the case it requires the greatest skill of a renowned medicine man to effect a cure. While the patient is supported in a half-sitting attitude, the medicine man first of all stands close by, gazing down upon him in the most intent manner. Then, going a few yards away, he looks fiercely at him, bends slightly forward and repeatedly jerks his arm outwards, at full length, during which performance he is supposed to project some of the Atnongara stones into the patient's body, in order to counteract the evil magic at work within him. Going rapidly, with a characteristic prancing, high knee-action from one end of the cleared space to the other, he repeats the movement with dramatic effect. Finally, he comes close again, and

after much mysterious searching finds and cuts the string, which is invisible to every one but himself. There is not a doubt among the onlookers as to his having really done this. Then once more the projecting of the Atnongara stones is repeated, and after this, crouching down over the sick man, he places his mouth upon the affected part and sucks until at last the Ullinka is extracted—either in fragments or, very rarely, and only if he be a great and very distinguished medicine man—whole—and shown to the wondering audience, the Atnongara stones returning once more into his own body.

CHAPTER XIV

MAGIC

ALMOST every action in the life of a Central Australian savage from the day of his birth to that of his death is associated, in some way or other, with magic. No sooner is the Arunta child born than a black line is painted over his eyebrow, in order to ward off sickness. How, or why, it should do so does not in the least trouble the savage parents. They have been told by the old men that it will, and that is quite enough for them. The idea of putting any of their beliefs to the test of experiment never enters their heads. If the young child avoids sickness then, of course, it is the result of the black line; whether there be really any relationship of cause and effect between the means adopted to secure a given result and the result which actually follows, is a question which they never ask. If the desired result does not follow, then it means that some other person has worked evil by counter magic, and the savage goes on his way perfectly content with this very simple explanation.

In some Australian tribes the power to perform magic, whether to hurt or to help any one, is possessed by only comparatively few people, but in the Arunta and, in fact, all the Central tribes any one, man and woman alike; can perform magic, though it is more generally practised by men than by women, and there are certain forms all



Fig. 177. CEREMONY OF ALKIRA-KIUMA, ARUNTA TRIBE.
Throwing the novice up into the air.

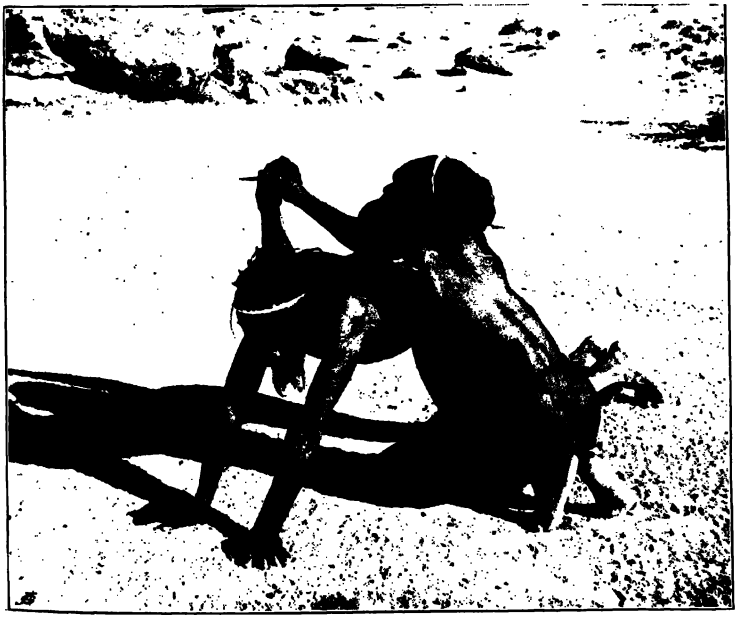


Fig. 178. POINTING THE IRNA, ARUNTA TRIBE (p. 347).

knowledge of which is confined strictly to the men. There are, of course, particular men who are supposed to be especially skilful, and there is a distinct class of medicine men, though their special ability lies in the curing and not in the causing of disease, and in finding out whose magic has caused the death of any individual. Probably in all tribes magic of some kind may be practised by every one, but in some its use has become more and more restricted to a special class of individuals who rank as so-called medicine men, wizards or sorcerers, and may sometimes profit to a large extent by their cunning. In the Central tribes, unlike many others, magic is not made a means of gain or profit.

As soon as ever a boy is capable of taking part in the ordinary work and life of the camp, which so far as he is concerned means largely searching for food, he finds himself very much hampered by restrictions as to what he may and may not eat. Needless to say it is just the most tempting and choicest things that he must not touch on penalty of suffering from the effects of evil magic. Not only must he not eat these things himself, but he must provide certain of the older men with them, more especially any one who might lawfully be his father-in-law. If he neglects to perform this duty he will suffer not only from evil magic but from personal chastisement at the hands of the aggrieved man. There comes a time, during one of the initiation ceremonies, when the boy is thrown up into the air and caught by the men (Fig. 177). The offended "father-in-law" provides himself with a suitable cane and, as the boy rises and falls helplessly, he hears some one shouting, "I will teach you to bring me food," and has ample cause to remember and regret his neglect of tribal custom.

A few of the restrictions and the penalties involved are

as follows, though of course it must be remembered that they vary in detail in different tribes :—kangaroo tail or wild turkey and its eggs, penalty premature old age; large lizards and emu fat, penalty becoming deformed and diseased; all kinds of parrots and cockatoos, penalty a hollow on the top of the head and a hole under the chin; large quail and its eggs, penalty non-growth of the beard and whiskers; eagle-hawk, except the tough sinewy legs, penalty leanness—the legs are supposed to be admirable food for a boy, in fact he is often struck on the calf with an eagle's bone, strength passing from the one to the other; night jar, penalty an ugly enlargement of the mouth. In some cases the relationship between crime and punishment is evident, and everywhere the most important idea underlying these restrictions is that of reserving all the best things for the old men, and so firmly ingrained is the belief in the power of magic, that, in the natural state of the tribe, the restrictions are implicitly obeyed. Needless to say there are just as many restrictions in the case of girls and women, with equally suitable penalties for non-observance.

As the boy grows up he begins to mingle more and more with the men and hears them, as they sit around their camp fires at night time, when no women and children are about, talking of Churinga and magic things of which, as yet, he has only the vaguest idea; in fact, when he is present, they only refer to them in such a way that he cannot understand what they mean and is, in consequence, filled with curiosity. He comes to know, however, that there are objects of magic which he must not yet see, and subjects which, at the risk of his life, he must not pry into, and looks forward to the time when, as an initiated man, he will be allowed to take his place amongst the full-grown men and learn something of the

secret matters which are all the more attractive to him because all knowledge of them is so jealously guarded by the older men.

Up to the time of initiation the Arunta boy is taught to believe that the strange noise which warns him, just as it does the women, to keep far away from the sacred ground where the men are performing magic ceremonies, is the voice of a great spirit called Twanyirika. When he is initiated he learns that this is simply a tale told to mystify the women and children, and that, in reality, the noise is made by the magic bull-roarer—a thin slab of wood, twirled round at the end of a string—and a few are solemnly handed to him by the old men, with stern injunctions that they must be safely kept and under no pretence whatever shown to the women and children. Their sacred nature is impressed upon him time after time, and he learns that in the Alcheringa, the far past time when the mythic ancestors of the tribe lived, these ancestors carried about with them the very Churinga, one or two of which are now entrusted to his care for a short time. To the white man there is nothing very awe-inspiring about the Churinga, but to the savage youth, who has been taught to believe implicitly in what the old men tell him, it is quite a different matter; and, in fear and trembling, he takes them in his hands firmly believing that they are full of the most potent magic, and listens in silence to what the old men tell him about the ancestors whose spirits are still associated with the Churinga, which for the first time in his life he is privileged actually to see and handle. From that time forward he is gradually taught more and more of sacred matters and allowed to take part in ceremonies, though much depends on his behaviour. If he takes a real interest in the ceremonies and traditions of the tribe, then the old men gladly instruct

him in sacred matters; but if, on the other hand, he be what the Arunta people call "irkun oknira," that is light and frivolous and given to chattering like a woman, then he is taught but little and grows up to be a man of no importance in the tribe.

As soon as he has been initiated the youth finds himself on a different footing from that which he occupied as a boy. The men now speak freely to him, and he hears a good deal about magic of various kinds, some of it used to control nature so as to ensure a plentiful supply of food and water, other kinds used to hurt an enemy or to charm a woman.

Amongst other forms he hears a great deal about pointing sticks and bones. These, in some form or another, are used by all Australian tribes. Amongst the Arunta any one may make and use them, though it is rather a risky game, and is carried on more or less in secrecy. There are various forms of them, the two commonest being called by the Arunta Irna, or pointing stick, and Injilla, or pointing bone (Figs. 180, 181, 182). The former is nothing more than a small piece of wood, varying in length from three inches up to eighteen, and resembling a skewer in general shape. At one end it tapers to a point, and at the other it is tipped with a little knob of resin to which a strand of human hair string is attached. Usually it is ornamented with notches, or circles, or a spiral groove made with a fire-stick, and in addition it is often decorated with white or red bird's-down arranged in various ways. To endow it with evil magic it must be "sung." When this is done the man who intends to use it, goes, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by a friend, into the bush, to some spot far away from the camp where he will be free from observation, and placing



Fig. 179. POINTING-STICKS, KAITISH TRIBE (p. 326).



Fig. 183. SPEAR-HEAD USED AS POINTING APPARATUS AND FOR EVIL MAGIC, CALLED NAKITJA BY THE KAITISH TRIBE (p. 350).

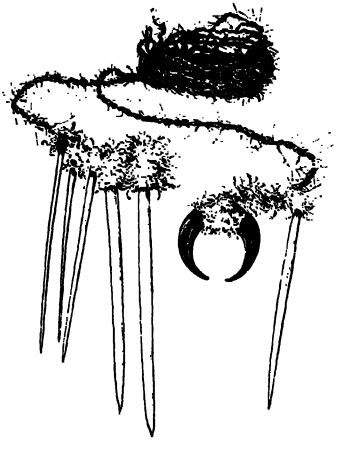


Fig. 184. UNGAKURA, POINTING APPARATUS, ARUNTA TRIBE (p. 348).

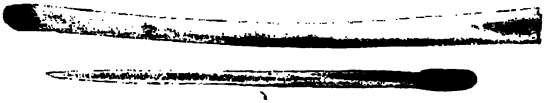


Fig. 180. INJILLA OR POINTING-BONE, WITH ITS CASE, ARUNTA TRIBE.



Fig. 181. IRNA OR POINTING-STICK, COVERED MOSTLY WITH BIRDS' DOWN, ARUNTA TRIBE.



Fig. 182. IRNA OR POINTING-STICK, MARKED WITH A BURNT DESIGN, ARUNTA TRIBE.

the stick in the ground, crouches over it muttering some such curse as the following :—

Ita pukalana purtulinja apinia-a—"May your heart be rent asunder."

Purtulinja apinia-a intapa inkirilia quin appani intapakala-a—"May your backbone be split open and your ribs torn asunder."

Okinchincha quin appani ilchi ilcha-a—"May your head and throat be split open."

In this way the stick, and the same is true of the pointing bone, is charged with evil magic and is then left in the ground for a few days. The actual pointing may take place out in the bush, as shown in the illustration (Fig. 178), the man who does this thrusting his beard into his mouth as the native often does when he is performing any special ceremony in connection with which he feels fierce and savage. All the while he jerks the pointing stick in the direction of his enemy, muttering incantations to the evil magic to go forth, straight, and kill him. Sometimes the pointing is done close to the camp, in which case, after it is dark and while the men are sitting round the camp fires, the man carrying the Irna creeps up stealthily, taking care that no one sees him, until, by aid of the firelight, he can see his enemy's face. Then he stoops down and jerks the stick either over his shoulder or between his legs. The evil magic goes from the point of the Irna straight to the man, who very soon afterwards sickens and dies, unless his life be saved, as fortunately it often is by the aid of a medicine man who can discover and remove the stick. In some cases, when the man is ill, the string attached to the resin is slowly burnt in the fire, an act which is supposed to render the death of the man just as certain as the destruction of the string.

There is really very little difference between the greater number of the magic implements (Plate VI.) used by all the tribes of the Central area, but every now and again we met with a form which was peculiar to some special locality. Possibly the head man of the group of natives inhabiting that part, being of an ingenious turn of mind, set himself to work to invent some specially effective piece of apparatus wherewith to injure his enemies; for it must be confessed that, though he has many good points, the Australian savage is particularly fond of injuring an enemy when the latter is unable to help himself. A man who can invent any implement which is, rightly or wrongly, supposed to be especially effective and deadly, is regarded as a really great man and a benefactor to his people, in much the same way in which, among civilised nations, a Krupp or an Armstrong, a Maxim, a Brennan or a Whitehead, is regarded as one who has aided the particular nation with which he may be associated.

A special pointing apparatus, called Injilla Ungakura, is met with in a group of natives living out in the Eastern Macdonnells. It consists of a strand of human hair string more than two yards long (Fig. 184). To one end are attached five little pointing bones and to the other a pair of eagle-hawk claws and a single pointing bone. It needs two men to work the deadly implement. First of all a little heap of dust is pushed up before them, to serve as a protection. If this were not done the intended victim would probably dream of the ancestral camp of the mother of the man who is pointing the bones. Such a dream would be a sure sign to him that her son was trying to injure him by evil magic, and of course he would naturally retaliate. The bones and claws have previously been "sung" in order to endow them with magic, which, when they are jerked in the direction of the victim, goes

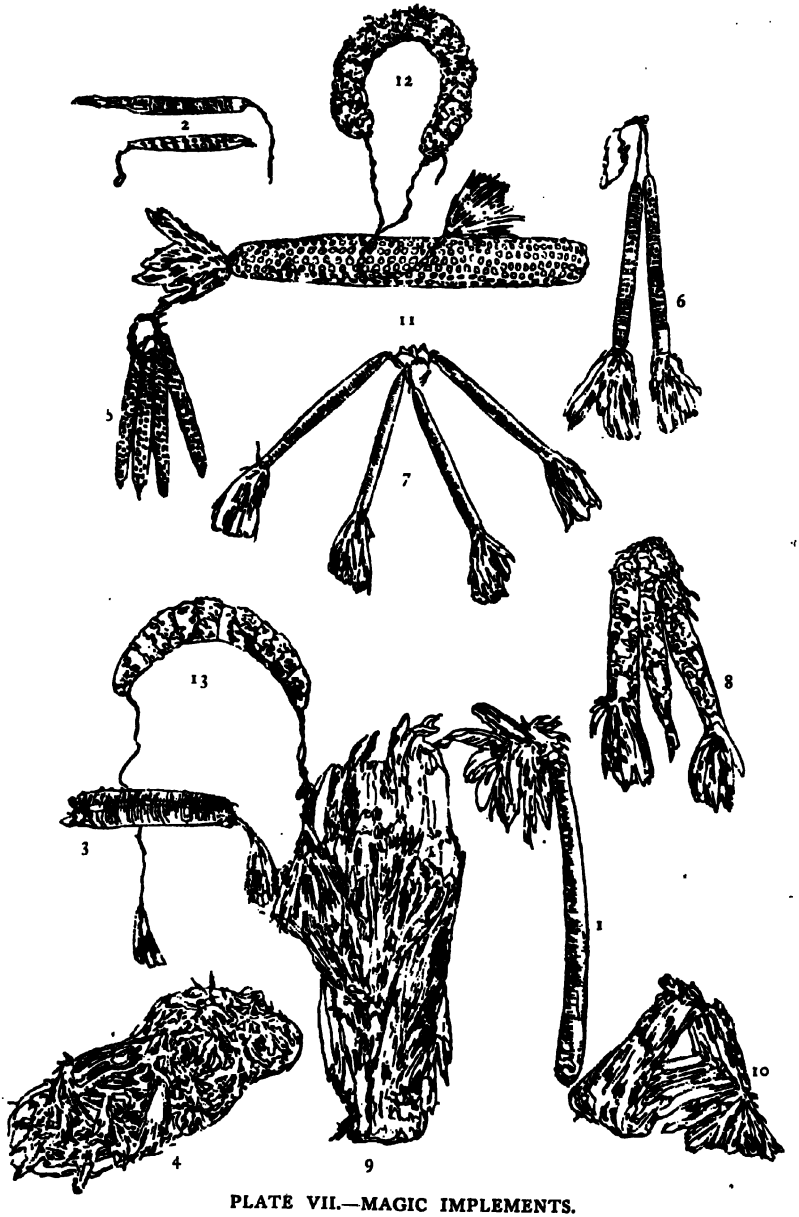
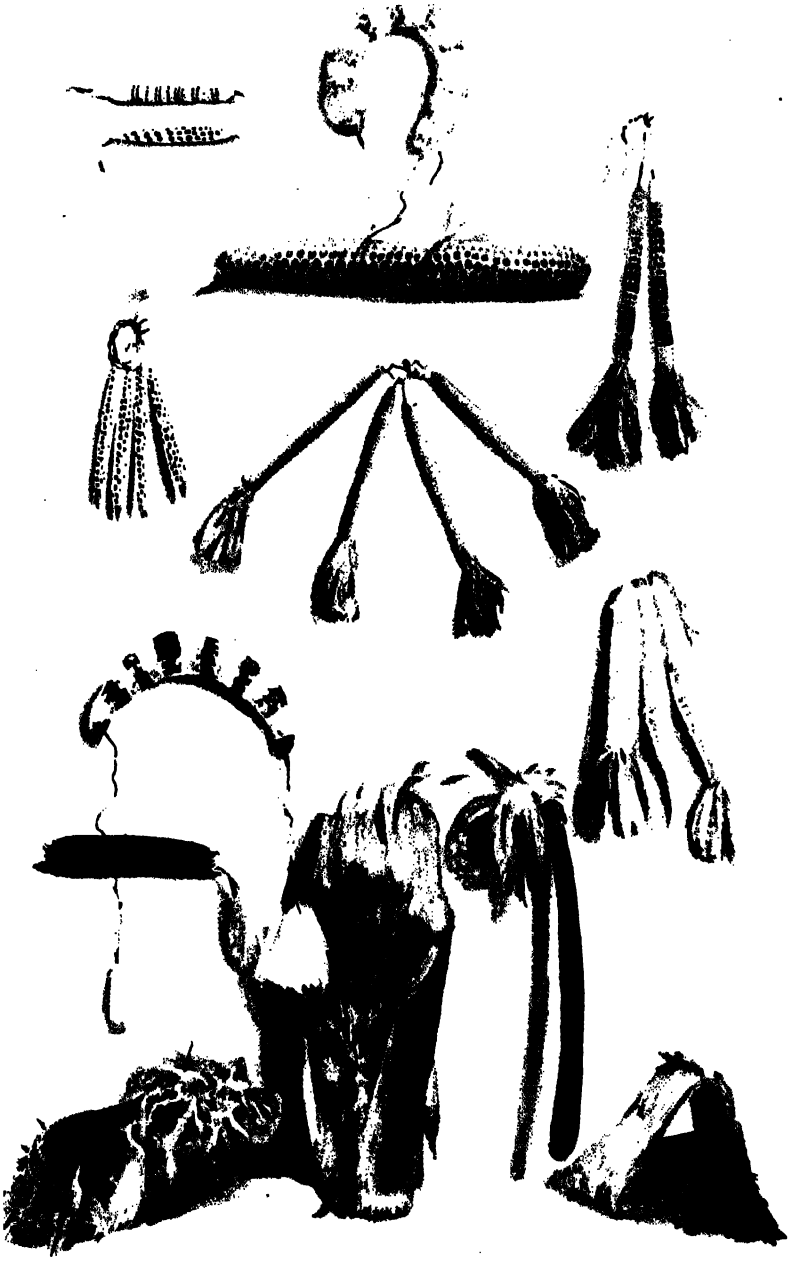


PLATE VII.—MAGIC IMPLEMENTS.

1. Arm-bone used for magic purposes. Secured in the Warramunga tribe, but made by a man of the Gnanji tribe.
2. Akuntilia, containing whiskers cut from the head of a dead man. Kaitish tribe.
3. Irrulkna-kinna, a girdle made out of the hair cut from the head of a dead man. The girdle is wrapped in paper-bark wound round with human
4. Various bands of fur and hair string which have belonged to a dead man. Kaitish tribe.
5, 6. Tana, containing whiskers cut from the head of a dead man. Warramunga tribe,
7, 8. Wallia-wallia, made out of the hair cut from the head of a dead man. Kaitish tribe.
9. Wallia-wallia and girdle worn by a dead man, wrapped in paper-bark.
10. Wallia-wallia wrapped in paper-bark. Kaitish tribe.
11. Burumburu, dead man's arm-bone wrapped in paper-bark, ornamented with a design of yellow and black spots. This was taken out of the ground, after having been broken and buried. Warramunga tribe.
12, 13. Okinchalanina-irrulknakinna, neck-bands enclosing hair cut from a dead man. Arunta tribe.

PLATE VII.

Face p. 348



straight into the body of the latter, causing great pain, especially that which proceeds from the claws, because these grip and tear the internal organs.

Another very special and efficacious implement is met with, so far as we know, only in one tribe, far out to the west of the Macdonnell Ranges. It consists of about two feet of hair string covered with red down. To one end is attached a lump of resin from which project the two front teeth of a rat; the other end is ornamented with the tail tip of a rabbit bandicoot. It is called Tchintu, which is also the name in that tribe of the sun, and its special efficacy lies in the fact that, after it has been properly "sung," it contains the heat of the sun, or rather some part of it, and all that you have to do, in order to injure an enemy, is to place it in his tracks. The heat follows up the doomed man, goes inside, and quickly burns him up. In this way they explain the cause of a violent fever.

Of course all magic implements are kept carefully concealed, and all performances, at least those connected with evil magic, are carried out in the strictest secrecy. If a native should chance to detect some one in the act of pointing a bone or stick at him he would be quite justified in killing his enemy on sight, and, though a man is not at all averse to having the reputation of being strong in magic, still there is always a certain amount of risk attached to it, because the illness, or death, of every individual is attributed to the evil magic of some one else, who in the end may pay for his reputation with his life.

In the Arunta tribe the spirits are supposed to use a special form of pointing-stick called Ullinka, which is merely a little twig of wood about four inches long with a small crook at one end. The spirit, who has of course the great advantage of being invisible, inserts the stick

into the victim's body, and every now and then gives it a malicious little twist, by means of an unseen string, which causes very severe twinges of internal pain.

Every tribe has a particular dread of magic connected with a distant place. It is something that they know nothing about, and is therefore more or less uncanny. The Kaitish use an apparatus called Nakitja (Fig. 183), which they obtain from tribes far out to the West. It consists of a chipped quartzite spear-head with a small lump of resin to which human hair string is attached, and is supposed to be very strongly endowed with evil magic.

Amongst the Kaitish, Warramunga, and northern tribes generally, a very potent form of evil magic, called "mauia," is supposed to be associated with certain special little stones. The latter are only actually procured and endowed with their evil magic by members of the Worgaia and Gnanji tribes, who call the magic "maringilitha," but they are traded away south as far as the Kaitish tribe, and members of the latter will occasionally use mauia when they desire to injure an Arunta man. Each little stone is wrapped up in fold after fold of paperbark and string. When it is used amongst the southern tribes, the usual plan is to powder a little off on to the tip of a spear, and then to drop it very quietly on to the victim's body while he is asleep. Sometimes a little will be carried on a bit of bark between the toes, and may thus be dropped on to a sleeping man without exciting suspicion. A native in the act of doing this is represented in one of the scenes during the performance of the Illionpa corrobboree (Fig. 185). Amongst the Gnanji tribe, from whom supplies of mauia or maringilitha come to other parts, the man carrying the powder, wrapped up in paperbark, sneaks upon his enemy at night-time. Then he quietly returns to camp, bringing back the paperbark



Fig. 185. SCENE IN THE ILLIONPA CORROBBOREE DEPICTING A MAN GIVING MAUIA TO ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL WHO IS SUPPOSED TO BE LYING ASLEEP, ARUNTA TRIBE.
The man carries the *mauia* or stone containing evil magic between his toes.

with him, lights a small fire, and burns the bark while his enemy lies asleep. This burning of the bark not only makes the death of the man still more certain, but, according to the speed at which it is burnt up, it can be foretold whether the man will die slowly or rapidly. According to the Warramunga tradition it was an old Pittongu (bat) man who first of all introduced mauia; he travelled away to the north from the Murchison Ranges, carrying with him stone axes, stone knives, barbed spears, and mauia. Far away to the north he dropped some of the latter, which fell to earth and made a very great explosion, a stone arising to mark the spot; and from this place mauia can now be obtained.

A still more curious case of the influence of foreign magic is associated with what, from its form, may be called a knout. It consists of from thirty to sixty strands of string, made from vegetable fibre, and every Arunta man carries at least one of these about with him, wrapped up out of sight in his wallet. The one and only object of the knout, as used by the Arunta, is to frighten the women. It is believed by the latter to be endowed with strong magic, and the very sight of it is quite enough to bring an erring woman to a sense of what is right and proper—that is, to make her obey her husband. Its magic is potent because it belongs to a distant place. When we got amongst the more northern tribes, such as the Warramunga, we found identically the same implement used by the men as a waist girdle. In these tribes it is in no way whatever associated with magic, and is merely an ordinary article of everyday wear. There is no difference of any kind between the girdle of the Warramunga and the knout of the Arunta man; in fact the latter is simply one of these girdles which has been "sung" in the far north and then traded down south in return for some such object

as perhaps a Churinga which the northerners do not make.

A great deal of mystery has been associated with what are called the Kurdaitcha or "debil-debil" shoes. They are popularly supposed to be worn by a man who goes out to murder an enemy. Each shoe consists of a pad of emu feathers about an inch or more in thickness and rounded at both ends. This serves as the sole of the shoe; the "upper" consists of a network of human hair string with a hole left in the middle for the foot to pass through, a thick cord of string passing across from side to side. The network is stitched on round the margin of the pad, but apart from this, there is no stitching employed and the emu feathers are formed into a compact mass by means of prodding them with a small bone. In some cases, at all events, a certain amount of human blood is used to assist in matting them together. Even with the shoe in one's hands it is difficult to understand how the feathers are kept together without any stitches (Fig. 186).

When first they came down from the Centre these shoes attracted a great deal of attention, and various ideas were current as to their exact use and meaning. According to the most generally accepted theory their object was to enable a Kurdaitcha man, as he is called, to travel over the country without his tracks being seen; or, at least, as both ends of the shoes are alike, without it being possible to detect either who he was or which way he was travelling. To any one who knows the natives and their phenomenal power of tracking this explanation is totally inadequate. It is true that the shoes might serve to prevent the recognition of the actual wearer, so long as he was wearing them, though even this would not of necessity be the case, but they would not be of the slightest use in preventing any native from at once

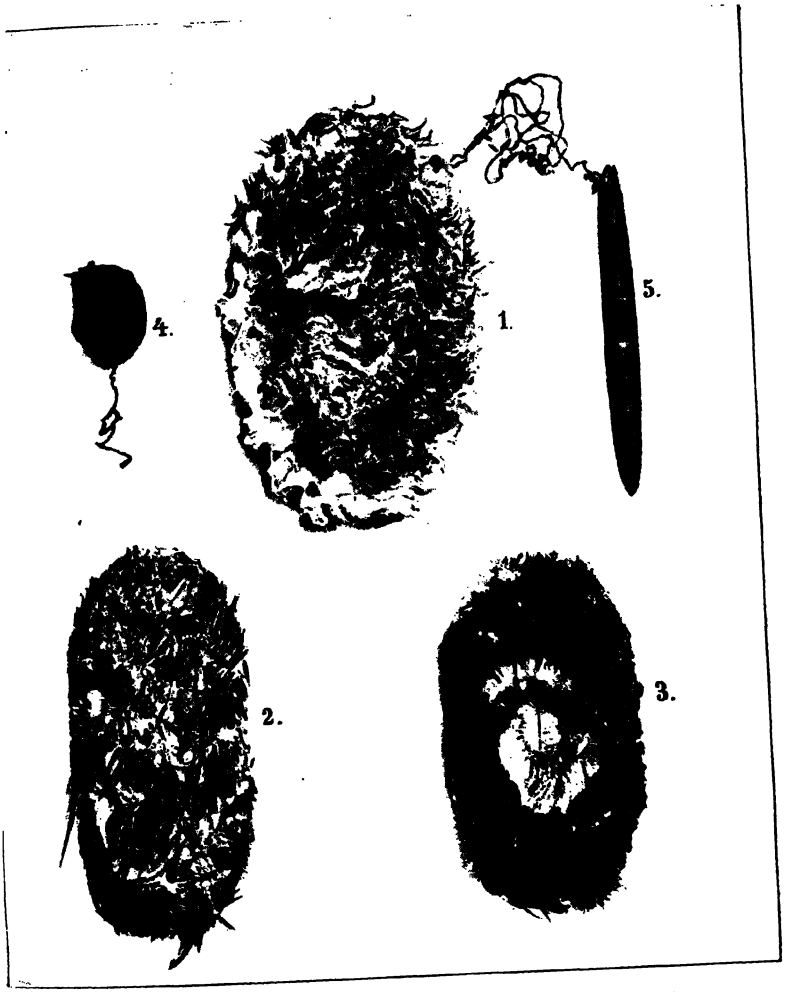


Fig. 186. EMU FEATHER SHOES WORN BY THE KURDAITCHA.

1, The shoe decorated with down; 2, the under, and 3, upper, surface of undecorated shoe; 4, human hair string used to tie the shoe to the foot; 5, small Churinga carried by the Kurdaitcha.

detecting the direction in which the wearer had travelled. A single blade of grass bent in one direction, or a stone turned over, is quite sufficient clue to a blackfellow, and if an expert tracker chose to follow the tracks up, he would not have the slightest difficulty in finding the spot at which the shoes were put on—if they ever were—and when once he had done this, he would not, again, have the slightest difficulty in detecting the individual who wore them. As a matter of fact the wearing of the shoes is more or less a myth; indeed it is safe to say that they are never actually worn, except possibly in connection with some ceremony, though at the same time the natives implicitly believe that they are. The Kurdaitcha is only one amongst many forms of magic and, like many other things, a great deal of humbug is associated with it. The native has no idea of death as the result of what we call natural causes, and imagines that it is always due to evil magic of some kind. He has, therefore, to account for every death, and amongst other things has invented this myth of the Kurdaitcha, and produces the feather shoes as proof positive of the existence of the man who wears them. There is no doubt but that every native believes most firmly that there is such a being as a Kurdaitcha, and he is even willing to undergo what must be a very painful ordeal in order to make other people believe that he is qualified to act as one. No man is supposed to wear the shoes unless he has had the little toe of one of his feet dislocated. When the operation is conducted, the patient first of all places the ball of the toe on a stone which has been heated to redness. The object of doing this, so say the natives, is to soften the joint; and then, with a sudden jerk, the toe is pulled outwards and the joint dislocated. There is no doubt whatever that some such ordeal as this is actually passed through. We have examined the feet

of men who claim to be true "Kurdaitcha ertwa" at various places in the Arunta tribe, and every one of them has had the toe of one foot, it does not seem to matter which, abnormally twisted outwards. Not only is this so, but the true Kurdaitcha shoe has a small opening left in the network through which the toe is supposed to be thrust.

That the whole thing is merely a piece of magic can be told from the account which the natives give of the *modus operandi*. As a general rule, though not always, a medicine man accompanies the Kurdaitcha. The latter is rubbed over with charcoal—black being especially associated with magic in the Arunta—and has vertical bands of white down painted on his face and on the front of his body so far as the knees. The medicine man has a median line of white from the top of his helmet to the tip of his nose, a curved line round each eye and two curved ones on each side of his body, so that he can easily be distinguished from the Kurdaitcha man himself. Each man wears the shoes, which are decorated with pink and white down, and while they are being put on, the following simple refrain is chanted by the Kurdaitcha:—

Interlinia turla attipa
Interlinia attipa,

which means "Interlinia (the native name of the shoes) to me stick fast, Interlinia stick fast." Each man carries a shield, spears and also one or more bull-roarers, which are supposed to impart strength, courage and accuracy of aim and also to make them invisible to their enemies. Further still, the Kurdaitcha wears a girdle made from the hair cut from the head of the man whose death he is going to avenge. This girdle, the hair to make which is



Fig. 187. KURDAITCHA CREEPING UP TO HIS ENEMY.

Between his teeth he holds a small stone Churinga ; the shoes are seen on his feet, and in his left hand he holds a shield and two or three wooden Churinga.

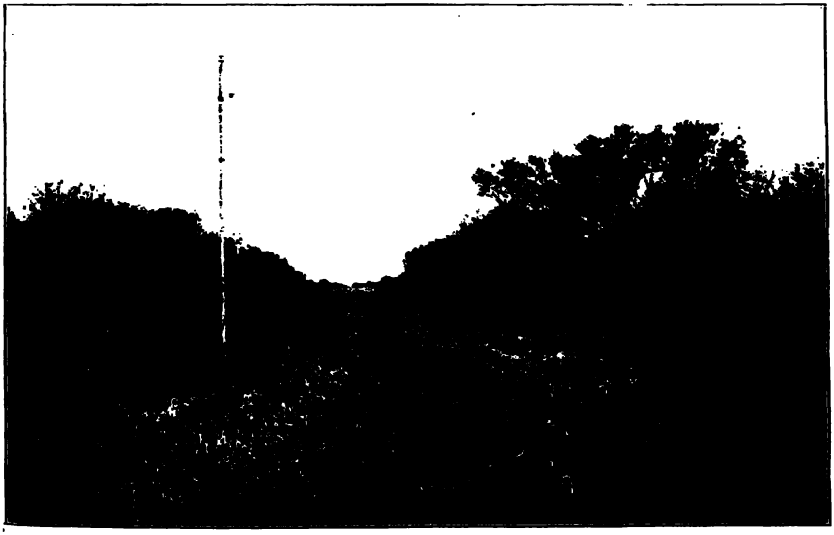


Fig. 188. THE OVERLAND TELEGRAPH LINE, SHOWING THE CUTTING MADE THROUGH THE MULGA SCRUB (p. 358).

cut from the man after he is dead, is a very potent object of magic.

Thus prepared, the two men start out from some secret place in the scrub, no one save themselves having any knowledge of the affair. They creep along carefully, avoiding coming into contact with any other natives, until the victim is seen. Then the medicine man falls behind, and the Kurdaitcha stealthily creeps forward (Fig. 187), carrying his bull-roarer in his mouth, until he is within striking distance, when he rises and spears his enemy from behind. This done, the medicine man comes upon the scene and, by means of magic, closes up the wound, a special form of lizard being used to suck up the blood, so that no trace of it is left; and then the two return quietly to their own country. The victim comes back again to life and goes to his camp, quite oblivious of the fact that he is full of evil magic, but in a short time he sickens and dies, and then it is known that he has been attacked by a Kurdaitcha. It is possible to recover from such an attack, but only by the aid of a medicine man who is particularly strong in magic and can overcome that of the Kurdaitcha.

The whole affair is a perfect myth, but yet the natives implicitly believe in it, just as they do in endless other forms of equally unmeaning magic. To those who have had no personal contact with the Australian or other savage, it will doubtless appear almost impossible that one man should actually believe that another can do something which he is perfectly well aware that he himself cannot do, though he pretends to be able to do so. This, however, is quite in keeping with the native character. The mystery which surrounds and adds importance to a man who is regarded as a Kurdaitcha is just exactly what appeals to the imagination of the

native, and he is quite willing to suffer even considerable pain and inconvenience if only he can gain a reputation as a man strong in magic. Possibly in course of time he actually comes to believe in his own powers—certainly he is quite willing to allow others to do so. Some of the men carry the shoes about with them, carefully hidden from the sight of women and children, who are never allowed to see them. They are certainly never used for walking purposes and the only use to which they are apparently put is that of carrying small objects, such as bull-roarers or stone knives, used during sacred ceremonies, which objects must themselves be carefully concealed from sight. The best feather shoes are made in the southern section of the Arunta tribe, and during recent years, since it has been discovered that they have a marketable value, a considerable number have been manufactured by the natives and have for some time past been finding their way into museums and curiosity shops; but as a general rule they can be distinguished by their small size, most of them being too small for even the foot of a native. As usual in the case of any special object, there are only a few men who can make them properly, and it will not be long before the art is lost, unless the market price remains remunerative enough to tempt a few natives to continue the manufacture, though before long lack of emus will prove a serious obstacle to the trade.

CHAPTER XV

BARROW CREEK TO TENNANT CREEK

We had not originally intended to spend very long at Barrow Creek, but when we settled down to work there among the Kaitish tribe and, more especially, when we came across old Ulpailiurkna, the Unmatjera man, we found that there was plenty for us to do and the time slipped by rapidly.

It was just four months after leaving Adelaide when we packed up and started off to the north to traverse the hundred and forty miles that lie between Barrow and Tennant Creek. Poor old Tungalla was very sorrowful when the time came for him to be retired from the staff. He was a fine old savage, and we were very sorry to leave him behind, but he would have been no use to us amongst the Warramunga, the next tribe that we should touch. He looked quite doleful while he was having, rather than enjoying, his last meal and smoke by the camp fire. However we rewarded him liberally, and when times are bad, the food supply small, and tobacco an absolutely unattainable luxury, his thoughts will often go back sorrowfully to the time he spent with us.

It was a brilliant winter's morning when we said good-bye to Mr. Scott and started off once more by the side of the telegraph line. First of all we had to pass out of the flat, on which the station lies, between a succession of

hills each crowned with a steep, almost perpendicular, escarpment of hard sandstone; and then once more we found ourselves in the arid, open country, typical of the Centre. There was nothing to be seen save a clear cut line, streaking away to the horizon through low mulga scrub and mallee gum trees (Fig. 188). Everything was as monotonous as possible, and the only colours in the landscape were the whitish-yellow of the withered grass, the pale green of the thin scrub and the blue of the cloudless sky. We had sent Chance on ahead of us with the wagon and were travelling with as light a load as possible. Our provisions were of the simplest—bread, meat and tea—just enough to carry us on until we overtook the wagon, so that our meals did not cost us much trouble. In this part of the world, where the sun shines down hotly all day long and any slight shade is welcome, the most refreshing and welcome portion of a meal is the inevitable quart pot of tea. Every one has his own quart pot, so that there is no trouble about the strength of the tea. The quart pot is a standing institution in this part of Australia. It is simply a large tin mug, holding the amount of water that its name implies. It is provided with a tin cup, the handle of which can be turned over so that when not in use the cup fits into the top of the pot. Ours had an extra contrivance in the form of a little wire gauze receptacle that fitted into the cup and could also be attached to the bottom of it by means of two slots into which its rim fitted. This was to enable the tea-leaves to be inserted in the boiling water and, when the tea was strong enough, to be withdrawn. Each of us had, of course, his own quart pot and put just as much tea into the receptacle as he wanted. The quart pots were arranged round the outside of the fire, and as soon as they boiled, the cup, with its receptacle

beneath, was placed on top so that the leaves within were in the boiling water. Tea made in this way is simply perfect, and we soon became accustomed to drinking it without milk. After a hard day's travel over dry desolate country nothing could be more refreshing than a quiet smoke with a quart pot of tea, and our most enjoyable times were those when we got into camp and over our evening smoke and tea discussed what we had done and what we hoped to do.

Next morning we were up long before sunrise and had finished our breakfast—a piece of steak, grilled on the hot coals with a very amateur gridiron—just as the first streak of light appeared in the east. The track was very heavy with thick sand and we made slow progress. At midday we saw a dark speck, three or more miles away on the horizon by the side of the telegraph line. When it came nearer we made out that it was a buggy with two travellers, one of whom was the Bishop of Carpentaria. When we met we stopped and had our midday meal together. The Bishop was perfectly at home in the rough life and was thoroughly enjoying his trip across his diocese, which is probably one of the wildest and most sparsely populated of any in the British Dominions. We were just about as far from civilisation as could be, and after an hour's spell we parted, the Bishop going south and we north.

After thirty-three miles of about as uninteresting and desolate country as can well be imagined, we reached the Wickliffe Creek, where things were a little better and there was a good supply of grass for our horses. The last thing that we heard after turning into our rugs on the ground by the side of our camp fire was the pleasant tinkling of the horse-bells, which showed us that they

were contentedly browsing and were not likely to wander far away during the night.

During the early part of the next day the country was very monotonous, but, after our midday halt, we could see ahead of us the low Davenport Range. We had to cross and re-cross the beds of two or three creeks, which were very rough and rocky. They came down from the ranges and only ran for a short distance across the plain. The former consist of a granite core overlain by sandstone which reaches a height of 1,600 feet. After traversing two or three miles of jumbled hills we came into a broad open valley that had evidently been formed by the wearing away of the sandstone (Fig. 189). The valley was traversed by the bed of a dry, meandering creek, the remnant of a stream that must originally have hollowed out the valley, denuding the sandstone and leaving bare the granite. The hills on each side were flanked by rounded masses of granite, some of which also stood out on the floor of the valley. Many of them were surmounted by spherical or egg-shaped boulders of gigantic size, looking as though a breath of wind would blow them over. Every now and again one rolls down and splits up, and then the huge fragments weather away until once more their edges are rounded off. These poised rocks are known as "the devil's marbles" (Fig. 190).

The sun was just setting when we reached our camp and found Chance there with the wagon. He had annexed two natives to show him where the waters were, as it is very easy to miss the scattered waterholes in this part of the country. We had a very comfortable camp among some bean trees, and, after a sumptuous meal on plum dough and grilled steak—the remnant of our supply brought on from Barrow Creek—we turned in for the night. Our two black boys camped near to us and the



Fig. 189. DAVENPORT RANGE.

The view is taken from a low hill on the east side of the Valley, across which can be seen the rounded masses of granite flanking the low range on the west. Two large granite boulders are seen in the foreground.

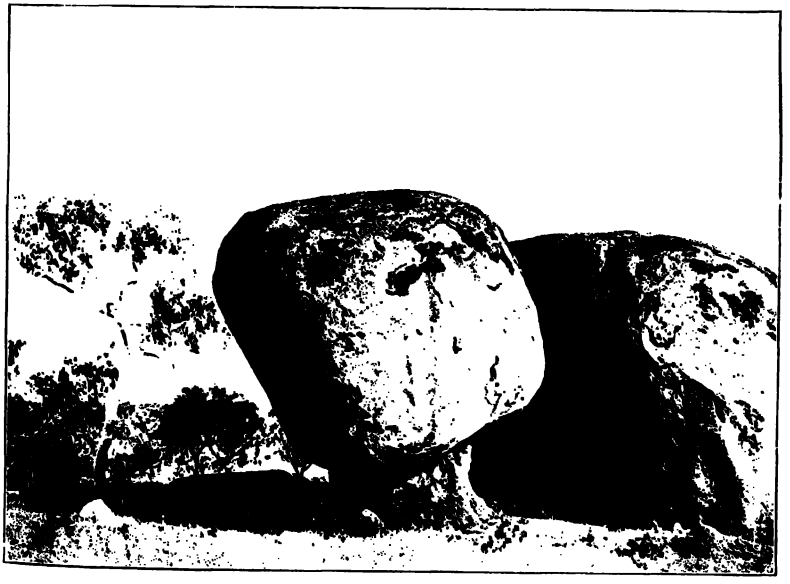


Fig. 190. "THE DEVIL'S MARBLES," DAVENPORT RANGE.

The sandstone hills are seen in the background.

two strangers further away, while our two terriers were on the *qui vive*, and not at all satisfied with the looks of the latter. They were splendid little watchers, and had a cordial dislike to any strange animals, human or otherwise.

For the next two days there was nothing to be seen save mulga scrub, with sometimes miles of spear grass, growing to a height of eight or ten feet, and endless red ant hills. We had once more left Chance and the wagon behind, and, on the evening of the second day, camped at a Government well. As soon as ever we had drawn water and filled the trough for our horses hundreds of little, light-coloured "diamond sparrows" came twittering in from all directions. They were perfectly tame, and perched in crowds on the edge of the trough while we stood and watched them enjoying themselves. Then up flew some lovely galahs, with beautiful pink heads and breasts and grey wings. Except on the very rare occasions when rain falls the only water that they can get is that which passing travellers—very few and far between—leave in the troughs.

It was lucky for ourselves that we had left a small supply of water from our last camping place in our canteens, as the well water here smelt very strongly of defunct rats and was suspiciously full of hairs. The black boys did not seem to mind it, but we were glad to be able to make our tea of purer water.

Next morning we were up before sunrise and travelled on over the usual uninteresting country, dodging ant hills all the way and seeing nothing but stunted scrub, the telegraph line and the horizon, until, late in the afternoon, we reached the telegraph station at Tennant Creek—the most forlorn and hopeless-looking place imaginable. This was to be our centre for at least two months whilst

we worked among the Warramunga tribe, and we were warmly welcomed by Mr. Squire, who was acting as officer in charge during the absence of Mr. Field. Both of them were old friends, and we are not likely to forget the time we spent with them at Tennant Creek and the help which they afforded us in our work. The natives had been expecting us, and a good many were already in camp, but as soon as we arrived messengers went to summon those who had not come in, as they were preparing for a series of ceremonies. During the few years previous to our visit there had been a severe drought which had made it practically impossible for any large number to meet together, because both food and water were scarce, but, most fortunately for us, the drought had broken. Heavy rains had fallen, and, for the first time for some years, they were able to gather together and perform their ceremonies.

The telegraph station was decidedly primitive. It consisted of two small stone buildings. The main one, the total length of which was about thirty feet, contained three rooms; a central one which served both as operating and dining room, and on each side of this a small bed-room. The other contained a kitchen and a cook's room. Between the side walls and the roof there was a space all round with metal supports for the rafters so that the white ants could not attack them. The space also served to admit fresh air and clouds of dust. The partitions between the rooms did not go up to the roof, and one of the first things we did was to fix up a dark-room in which we could develop our photographs. Between the roof and the partition we slung a tarpaulin, and then by using yards and yards of turkey red which we had brought up, thinking we might perhaps want it for this purpose, as well as for decorating the bodies of the lubras, we

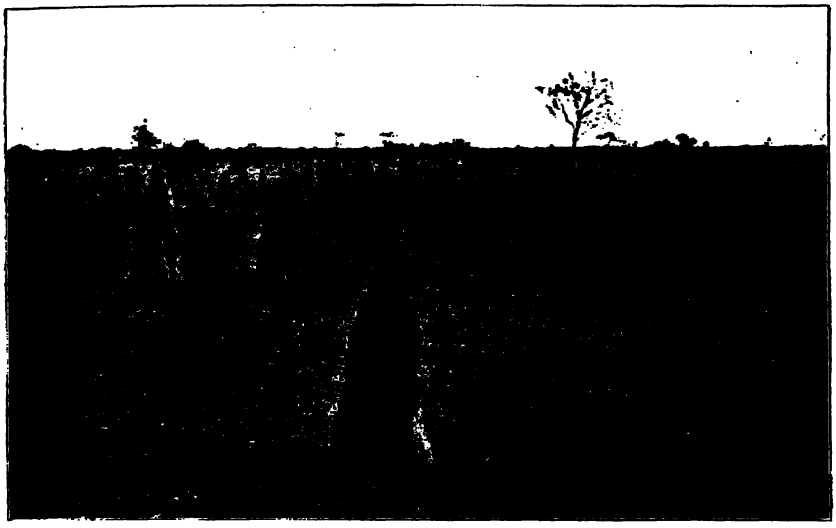


Fig. 191. ANT HILLS AT TENNANT CREEK.



Fig. 192. CHILD RUNNING, SHOWING THE TOES TURNED OUTWARDS, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE (p. 365).

stuffed up all the space between the roof and walls, covered the windows and sundry cracks; and then, with rugs over the doors, we were furnished with a fairly efficient dark-room, though, of course, every drop of water that we used had to be carried from the well in the bed of the creek, a quarter of a mile away.

Sometimes the heat was stifling and it was difficult to keep the films from frilling completely off the plates, but it was no use waiting for a cool day, and, right through the expedition, we made it a rule to keep our photographs as closely up to date as possible and to secure a print as soon as we could, in case anything happened to the plates in transit.

Tennant Creek, from which the station takes its name, is a small watercourse about a quarter of a mile away from the station and perfectly dry, except when rain is actually falling. It is bordered, as usual, by gum trees, and, except for these, there is no vegetation save miserable stunted scrub—odd bushes scattered at intervals over a dry arid plain. Immediately around the station there is nothing except, on one side, a bare stretch of sandy soil between it and the creek and, on the others, an extraordinary number of red ant hills (Fig. 191). The creek runs in a curved line from the east round to the south and then westwards. The station looks out to the south towards the line of gum trees bordering the creek, on the opposite side of which was the main camp of the natives. Across the creek, to the east, was the ceremonial ground, the gum trees, owing to the curving of the creek, completely hiding it from the view of both the station and the main camp.

Chance, with the wagon, came in a day after our arrival, and, having made our camp close to the station, we settled down to work among the Warramunga tribe.

CHAPTER XVI

LIFE IN THE WARRAMUNGA CAMP

We spent two months amongst the Warramunga and got to know them well and also to like them. We had previously known some of them for many years, which made our work amongst them much easier than it would otherwise have been. So far as physique was concerned, they were superior to either the Arunta or the Kaitish tribe. In respect of height there was a decided difference between the Warramunga and the Arunta nations in favour of the former. The average of fifteen men of the Warramunga was 173·8 cm., the tallest man measuring 180 cm. There were only three men under 170 cm. On the other hand the average height of twenty-six men of the Arunta nation was 166·8 cm. In the case of the women, the average height of thirteen Warramunga lubras was 162 cm. and that of the same number of the Arunta was 155·5 cm. Amongst the Arunta women only two measured over 160 cm., but of the Warramunga only four measured less.

This difference in size is difficult to account for, as the country of the Warramunga is no better than that of the Arunta. In fact the greater part of it is not so good, because, in the large area occupied by the Macdonnell Ranges in the Arunta country, there is very rarely any lack of food and water, whilst the greater part of the



Fig. 193. TWO CHILDREN, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 194. TWO YOUNG BOYS, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

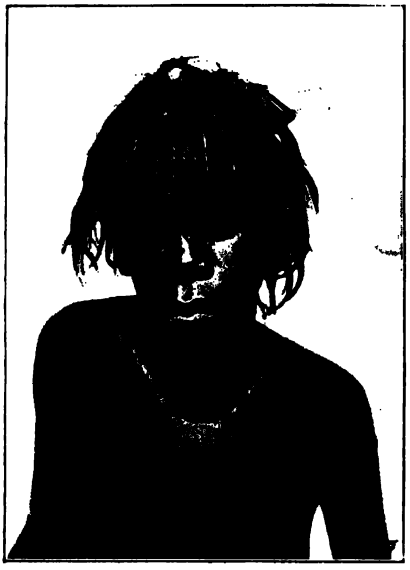


Fig. 195. YOUTH PASSING THROUGH THE INITIATION CEREMONIES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 196. YOUTH PASSING THROUGH THE INITIATION CEREMONIES, SHOWING THE METHOD OF TYING THE HAIR UP, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 197. YOUNG WOMAN, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

Warramunga country is very dry and more liable to drought, with its consequent scarcity of food supply.

One striking feature of the Warramunga men as compared with the Arunta and Kaitish is that not only do they pull out the hairs on the forehead, but they do the same with those on the upper lip. At first we thought that they must adopt some method of shaving with a sharp stone, but this is not so. The process must be a very painful one, as every hair is pulled out separately. We several times came across an old man lying down in camp with a younger man sitting beside him busily engaged in pulling out the old man's hairs (Fig. 200). The figures will serve to give a good idea of the physical appearance of the Warramunga—both men and women—at different periods of their life (Figs. 192-204). The old women (Fig. 204) are especially hideous. Their hair is always cut very close, and in addition every one is characterised by a hard scar down the middle of her scalp, the result of first of all cutting it open with a fighting club and then searing the wound with a red-hot fire-stick during the mourning ceremonies.

We fortunately visited the Warramunga during a comparatively good season, when it was possible for a large number of them to gather together. News of our coming had been sent on ahead of us from Barrow Creek, and when we arrived at Tennant Creek we met with a very warm welcome from those who had known us before. It also happened, most fortunately for us, to be a time when they were gathered together to perform their sacred ceremonies, so that we were able to study them under the most favourable conditions. There were altogether at least two hundred natives in camp. The ceremonial ground was placed on one side of a creek

bordered by a belt of gum trees and scrub that served the purpose of a screen and effectively prevented the performers from being seen by women and children in the main camp.

The scenery around the telegraph station was very uninteresting. Away in the distance there was a low range of hills, but otherwise the country was flat and, except just along the banks of the creek, sparsely covered with very poor, thin scrub, or dotted over thickly with ant hills. It was all so dry while we were there that we wondered what the natives found to live upon, but at times there arè plenty of succulent yams, and grass seeds of different kinds are abundant in parts, while in good seasons, kangaroos, emus and sundry smaller animals can be caught.

The day after we got there they were busy performing a wind ceremony, the object of which was to make the wind blow. There was no apparent need for the ceremony, as, at this time of the year, scarcely a day passes without a few strong gusts sweeping across the plains. However they firmly believe that they can both make it blow and make it stop, just as they like. At one time, when they were decorating themselves, the gusts were very unpleasant, and one of the other men told a wind-man to make it stop. Accordingly he shouted out to the wind and, in a minute, there was a lull, and no one doubted but that this was due to the power of the wind-man. Next day it blew harder than ever, of course as a result of the ceremony, and we had a violent dust storm—in fact scarcely a day passed without one. Without any warning the wind sprang up. Away in the distance, out to the east, we could see what looked like a heavy cloud of fog. Rapidly it bore down upon us. The trees and scrub bent before the wind, and soon



Fig. 198. WARRAMUNGA MAN.



Fig. 199. WARRAMUNGA MAN SHOWING THE NASAL SEPTUM BROKEN THROUGH.



Fig. 200. AN OLD MAN LYING DOWN AND A YOUNGER MAN PULLING OUT THE HAIRS ON HIS CHEEK, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 201. YOUNG WOMAN WEARING HEAD-BANDS, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 202. YOUNG WOMAN, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

everything was enveloped in a whirling mass of dust so thick that we could only see the dim outline of anything more than a few yards away from us. Gradually the storm passed by, leaving behind it a thick coating of dust over everything. Under these conditions life was not altogether pleasant, and it was no easy matter to keep our materials, more especially those concerned with our photographic work, in good order. The fine dust penetrated everything and, as it swept along the ground, banked itself up against anything that came in its way, just like snow driven before the wind. At times a whirlwind swept across the plain, twirling the sand round and round and carrying it up in the form of a great column, reaching up into the air for perhaps two hundred feet (Fig. 205). The column was so high that we could always see it a long way off. If it came in the direction of the camp there was a great commotion, the natives, especially the women and children, yelling at the top of their voices and rushing away as fast as their legs could carry them so as to get out of its road and avoid the evil spirit that lives in the middle of the whirlwind. Occasionally one of them struck the camp, scattering the mia-mias and their contents in all directions.

When not engaged in preparing for or performing ceremonies life went on in the usual way. The men, if they felt so disposed, went out hunting. The women and children were scattered about in search of grass seed and smaller animals, such as lizards and snakes. If there were plenty of food the men spent hour after hour squatting on the ground at their common camp, and the women did the same at theirs. On every large camping ground there are two such spots, one for the men and the other for the women, and each may be regarded as a

primitive and rudimentary form of club-house. The same feature is seen in every tribe. In the Arunta the men's private camp or club is called Ungunja; the women's Erlukwirra.

In the camp at Tennant Creek there was one middle-aged man who was especially skilful in making ground stone axes, and, while we were there, he spent a good deal of his time in this occupation. At the present day ground axes are much less common than flaked implements, because suitable material for making them is only found in relatively few spots in Central Australia, while quartzite—which can easily be flaked and chipped, but not ground—is very widely distributed. In the Macdonnell Ranges there is a "quarry" where supplies of diorite, suitable for grinding, used to be obtained, but now the making of ground axes has completely ceased in this part. Among the more northern tribes, such as the Warramunga, they are still made, but it will not be many years before they disappear.

We witnessed the complete operation on several occasions. In each case a large, rounded, diorite pebble was used. First of all it was roughly chipped, by means of a small lump of hard quartzite, to approximately the desired size and shape, as shown in Fig. 208, which represents one of the actual axes made by the Warramunga native, at this particular stage of its manufacture. This process only occupied a short time, but, though it looked simple enough, it required considerable care, as a mistake in the cutting off of a flake might easily result in the removal of a part of the surface which was intended to form the cutting edge, whilst too hard a hit with the quartzite might break the stone in two. Unless the operator is an adept at the work he is likely to spoil many pebbles before he is successful in manufacturing a



Fig. 203. YOUNG WOMAN WITH HAIR PLAITED AND WEARING HEAD-BANDS, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE (p. 365).



Fig. 204. OLD WOMAN, SHOWING SCAR ON THE CENTRE OF THE SCALP, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE (p. 365).

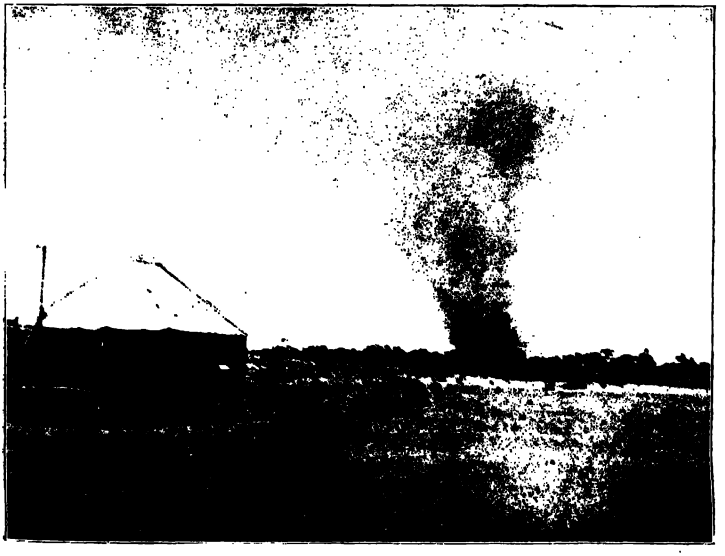


Fig. 205. DUST STORM TRAVELLING ACROSS THE PLAIN AT TENNANT CREEK.



Fig. 206. CHIPPING A BLOCK OF DIORITE PRIOR TO GRINDING IT DOWN TO FORM AN AXE-HEAD, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 207. MAN GRINDING AN AXE-HEAD, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
A partially ground axe-head is lying beside the grindstone.

single satisfactory axe. Every quarry is strewn round with such discarded attempts, which, amongst Australian collections, are technically known as "blanks."

When the preliminary flaking was over there followed the tedious process of levelling the surface. In some parts of Australia the general surface of the axe is left in a rough condition and only the cutting edge is further treated—a larger or smaller, sometimes a very small, part only being ground and polished; but amongst the Central tribes it is usual to work on the whole surface. For this purpose the operator took a small rounded pebble of quartzite and, hour after hour for a day or two in succession, he patiently hammered, or rather tapped, unceasingly on the rough surface, each tap removing a minute fragment of the stone, until it was covered over with little dents and all the irregularities were smoothed down (Fig. 206). Of course the extent to which this is carried out varies considerably, but, in a well-made axe, the work is so thorough that all traces of the first-made, rough flaking are removed. The exact shape of the axe varies much according to that of the original pebble; sometimes it is broad and flat, at others longer and narrower. When the hammering operation was complete there followed the grinding and polishing process (Fig. 207). For this purpose the man took one of the large, flat blocks of sandstone, used, in ordinary circumstances, for grinding grass seed or ochre. Squatting on the ground, in an attitude easily and normally assumed by a native, but very difficult and more or less painful to a white man, he took a small quantity of fine sand, strewed this over the surface of the grindstone, and then, sprinkling a little water over it, began to rub the axe backwards and forwards, first on one side and then on the other. Every now and then he added more sand.

and water, holding the axe very carefully so as to produce the two smooth surfaces meeting at, and forming, the cutting edge. This process occupied two days, during the whole of which the man worked hard, evidently taking the keenest interest in what he was doing. Time, of course, is no object to the native, and hour after hour he patiently ground away, until at last the axe was completed to his satisfaction. There still remained the hafting. To provide for this he cut from a gum tree a small, young stem about three feet long and two inches in diameter, and split it in half along its length. Then he removed the bark from one of the pieces and chipped it down with a sharp flake until it was of the desired thickness. In order to make it pliant the middle part was placed over a slow fire, consisting of a small mass of hot charcoal. During this process the withy was constantly removed from the fire and carefully tested to find out whether or no it could be bent completely round without breaking. When this could be done with safety, it was very slowly bent double round the blunt end of the axe, as seen in the illustration, and the two halves were tied together with a band of human hair string (Figs. 209–211). Vegetable string is also often used for this purpose. As an additional assistance towards the fixation of the stone in the withy, the enclosed end was encased in a resinous material obtained from porcupine grass. A lump of this was softened by heat and then pressed in between the withy and the stone. The resin rapidly hardened as it cooled, and its outer surface was smoothed down by means of a fire-stick which the operator passed slowly, backwards and forwards, over it. The axe was now ready for use, but, in order to make it look better, some red ochre was ground down, mixed with a little grease and rubbed over the handle.



Fig 208. BLOCK OF DIORITE, ROUGHLY CHIPPED INTO SHAPE, READY TO BE FURTHER CHIPPED AND THEN GROUND TO FORM AN AXE-HEAD, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE (p. 368).



Fig. 209. METHOD OF HAFTING A GROUND AXE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

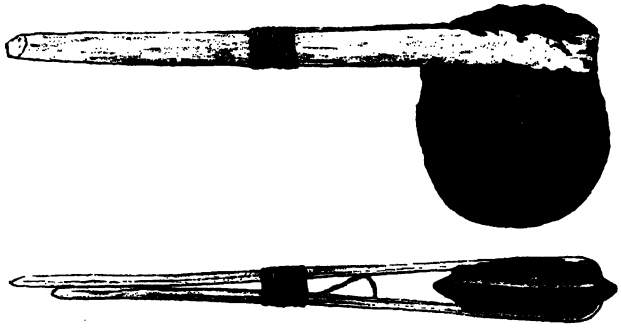


Fig. 210. HAFTED GROUND AXE, GNANJI TRIBE.



Fig. 211. FIXING THE AXE-HEAD ON TO THE HANDLE WITH RESIN, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
The man is applying a fire-stick to the resin to soften and mould it into shape.



Fig. 212. GUM-TREE FROM WHICH A ROUGH BARK PITCHI HAS BEEN CUT, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

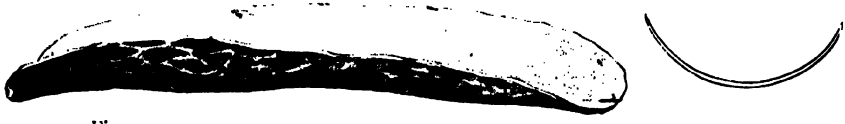


Fig. 213. ROUGHLY MADE PITCHI, CUT FROM THE BARK OF A EUCALYPTUS.

Ground axes of this kind are generally used for such purposes as cutting slabs of bark from gum trees to serve as rough pitchis, or blocks out of trees such as the bean tree, the wood of which is very soft and can easily be hollowed out and fashioned into more elaborate pitchis (Figs. 212, 213). They are also used for cutting steps in the bark of trees to enable a native to climb up the trunk and capture an opossum or any other animal hiding in a hollow branch, or to secure what the natives call a "sugar bag." This is the honeycomb of the native bee, which makes its rough hive in a hollow trunk or bough. The most unsatisfactory feature of the Central Australian axe is the method of hafting, and it is rather surprising that, in connection with this, the natives have not discovered the value of string or kangaroo sinew. For the purpose of splicing spears, or mending a broken spear-thrower or pitchi, they use a tendon which, when dry, contracts and holds the different parts together; but it never seems to have occurred to them that string or sinew would hold the axe-head securely in its place between the halves of the bent withy. As it is, their axe is at best a clumsy tool, because the resin is very brittle and cracks easily, so that anything like a hard blow results at once in the loosening of the stone.

Of flaked stone implements we saw four different kinds in the Warramunga camp: adzes, knives, picks, and spears. The adze usually consists of a curved handle more or less circular in section and ornamented with longitudinal grooves (Fig. 214). At each end is a bunch of porcupine-grass resin in which is placed a flake of flint or opaline quartzite. The flint may be either plano-convex in section or bi-convex, and the size of the cutting edge varies considerably. One surface has usually a single, decidedly convex facet, whilst the other is marked by a

number of small, secondary chippings. In Figs. 215–218 the ends of four adzes are drawn to show the more important variations in size and shape of the flints. Fig. 215 represents one with an especially large flint, showing the very characteristic single facet forming one surface. It also shows the secondary chippings on the opposite face and the convex outline of the cutting edge. In Fig. 216 we have almost the opposite extreme in regard to size, the flint being remarkably small. An implement such as this is used for making the finer grooves on pitchis, while the former is used for rough work such as the preliminary hollowing-out of a block of wood or the making of wide shallow grooves like those on the handles of picks and axes. Fig. 217 shows one of intermediate size, not so carefully chipped as either of the two first. Its smaller end is chipped so as to have a point, which is very useful in making fine grooves. Fig. 218 represents a distinct type. The flint is large, but the cutting edge instead of being convex is slightly concave, and on one surface there are a good many secondary chippings, especially towards one side. A flint such as this is very serviceable in smoothing down the excrescences on the handle of a spear or adze. As a general rule in the Warramunga the handle is curved and has a lump of resin with a flint at each end. Figure 219 shows the way in which the adze is used, and is reproduced from a snapshot of a man whom we came across one day while he was busy at work ornamenting the outside of a soft-wood pitchi. The latter is represented in Fig. 220. He held the adze in both hands near the end which he was using, with the concave side of the handle facing towards him, the pitchi being fixed securely between his knees, two sticks within it preventing the pressure of his knees from bursting in the sides. He spent hour after

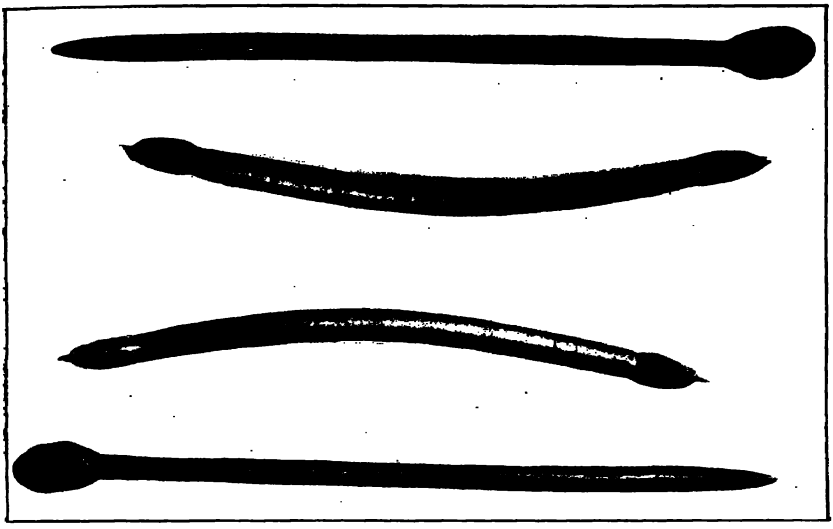


Fig. 214. CURVED AND STRAIGHT ADZES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 215. ADZE WITH LARGE FLINT USED FOR COARSER WORK, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

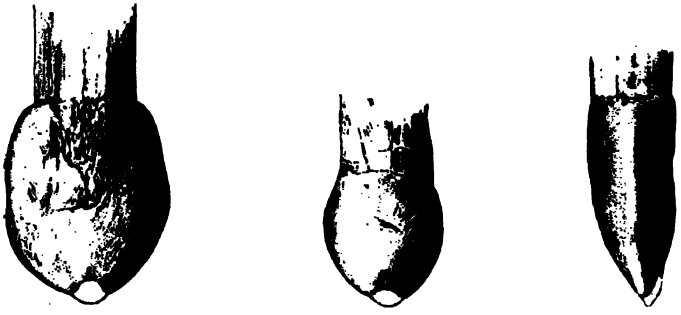


Fig. 216. ADZE, WITH SMALL, VERY REGULARLY SHAPED FLINT, UPPER, UNDER, AND SIDE VIEWS, ARUNTA TRIBE.



Fig. 217. TWO ENDS OF AN ADZE, UPPER AND END VIEWS, ARUNTA TRIBE.

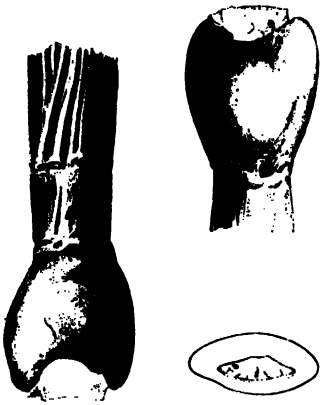


Fig. 218. ADZE, WITH LARGE, IRREGULAR-SHAPED FLINT, UPPER, UNDER, AND END VIEWS, ARUNTA TRIBE.



Fig. 219. MAN USING ADZE FOR MAKING THE GROOVES ON THE OUTSIDE OF A PITCHI, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

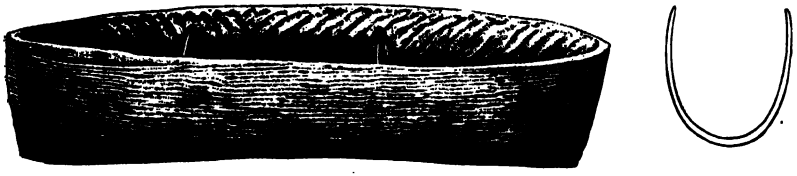


Fig. 220. BOAT-SHAPED PITCHI, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

hour in laboriously cutting a series of parallel grooves, each of them not more than an eighth of an inch wide and all of them cut with great regularity. This kind of work is always done by men, never by women; in fact we have never seen an adze in the possession of a woman.

The flaked knives vary to a large extent in size but are all fundamentally alike in form, any difference between them, except so far as secondary chipping is concerned, being attributable, not to deliberate design on the part of the maker, but to peculiarities in the nature of the material used, which varies in structure from that of a close-grained to that of a smooth, opalescent quartzite. In some form or another quartzite is distributed over a very wide area in Central Australia. It forms, for example, the relatively thin layer of so-called Desert Sandstone that caps the numerous flat-topped ranges of the Central area, and this affords an abundant supply of stone suitable for flaking and chipping. Each blade has three principal facets, a fourth smaller one being very often, though by no means always, present, and, even when it is there, it may be hidden from view in the resin that forms the haft. In some cases it may even extend the whole length of the blade. The shape of the blade varies very much. Sometimes it is broad in proportion to its length and at others long and narrow; but apparently this is not a matter of design and depends entirely upon the way in which the stone happens to flake. From the same block of quartzite a native will chip off broad, lanceolate and narrow, or elongated blades and will use them indiscriminately, so long as the point and edges are satisfactory.

The Warramunga, and its northern neighbour the Tjingilli tribe, are famed for their knives, which are traded far and wide among the Central tribes. Just within the

northern boundary of the Warramunga country, at a spot now called Renner's Springs, we came across a quarry which had been worked for many years past. The ground was strewn with numerous discarded flakes, because, for every one that is considered good enough to use, there are at least a score thrown aside as useless.

At this quarry we watched with much interest the process of manufacture as carried out by a Warramunga man. First of all he chose a small lump of quartzite which measured about eight inches in length and, roughly, six in diameter, the surface at one end being approximately flat, whilst towards the other it slightly tapered away. The latter was placed on the ground and then, holding the block upright in his left hand, he gave a series of sharp blows with a little quartzite stone held in his right hand. The first two blows were in spots close together, just within the margin, each resulting in the detachment of a flake, in such a way as to form two surfaces that ran down the face of the block and met towards the lower part. As a general rule these two surfaces are not in contact for their whole length. How far this is or is not the case depends simply upon whether the first two flakes lie closely side by side or are separated from one another at their upper ends by a longer or shorter face, with the result that, where this is present, the blade is tetragonal in section. The diagrams (Fig. 221) will, however, show what takes place in many instances, the upper one representing the block seen from above, the lower the flake chipped off from its side. The two first blows are made at the spots marked *x* and *y*, resulting, respectively, in flaking off chips lying between the points *a* and *b*, and *c* and *d*. The two surfaces thus produced meet below, but at the upper end are separated by the face lying between the points *b* and *c*. It is simply a matter

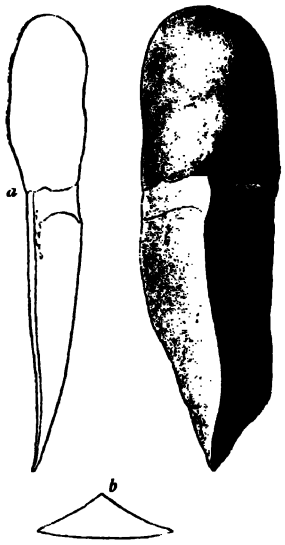


Fig. 222. STONE KNIFE OF REGULAR SHAPE, TRIGONAL IN SECTION, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 223. STONE KNIFE WITH VERY REGULAR SHAPE, THE BLADE MADE OF OPALINE QUARTZITE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

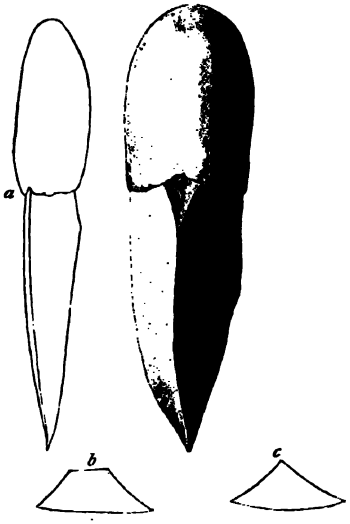


Fig. 224. STONE KNIFE, SHOWING FOURTH FACET FOR SHORT DISTANCE DOWN BLADE, SIDE VIEW AND SECTION, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 225. STONE KNIFE SHOWING FOURTH FACET RUNNING THE WHOLE LENGTH OF THE BLADE, WHICH IS THIN EVERYWHERE; TETRAGONAL IN SECTION. WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

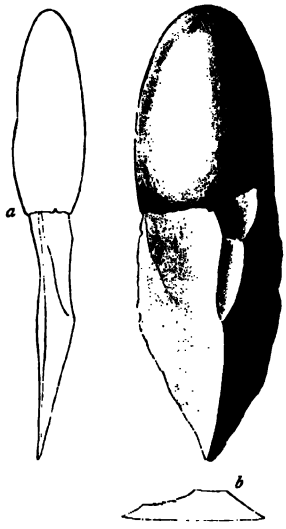


Fig. 226. STONE KNIFE, BROAD AND SOMEWHAT IRREGULARLY SHAPED, BROAD BLADE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
The section is taken near the handle.

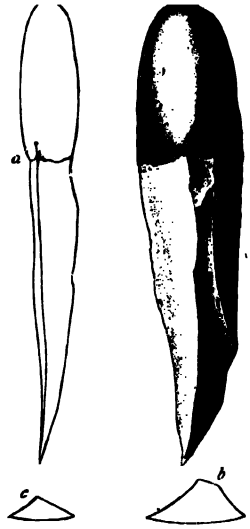


Fig. 227. STONE KNIFE, WITH LONG, IRREGULAR-SHAPED BLADE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
One section is taken near the handle and the other one-third of the way back from the tip.

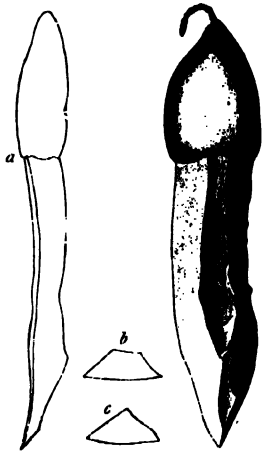


Fig. 228. STONE KNIFE, WITH IRREGULAR FLAKING AND SECONDARY CHIPPING, BUT WITH A GOOD CUTTING POINT, TJINGILLI TRIBE.
Human hair-string is attached to the resin. One section is taken slightly less than half-way down the blade, and the other through the highest part of the blade.

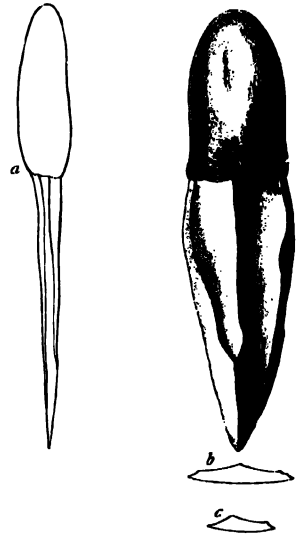


Fig. 229. STONE KNIFE WITH VERY FLAT BLADE, SHOWING ALSO SECONDARY CHIPPING NEAR THE TIP; WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
The sections are taken at one-third and two-thirds of the way down the blade.

of chance whether these points *b* and *c* are confluent or more or less wide apart. By means of a third blow on the point (*z*) a flake like the one figured may be made. The face of the main block from which the flake is struck may have a number of small surfaces more or less irregularly arranged, and one or more of these may be included in the flake as finally separated off, giving it an irregular shape; but, as long as the knife has a suitable cutting edge, it is used. Some idea of the principal variations in form may be gathered from the drawings of the series represented in Figs. 222–231, but it must be remembered that the shape of the blade, as finally produced, is largely a matter of chance. Occasionally, as in Fig. 230, the point, and to a certain extent the sides, may show a series of fine secondary chippings, fore-shadowing, as it were, the beautifully chipped spear-heads of the natives of north-west Australia.

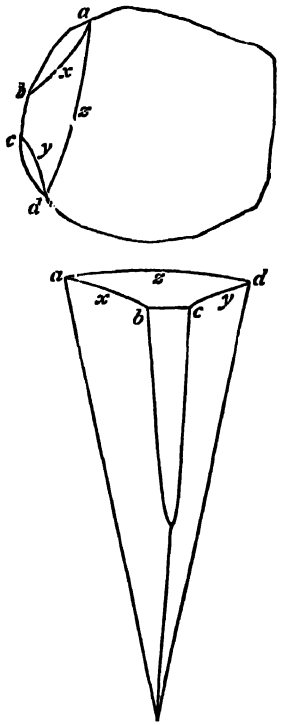


FIG. 221.

So far as the hafting is concerned there are two very distinct kinds. The simpler ones have merely a rounded knob of porcupine-grass resin; the more ornate ones have a more flattened mass of resin into which, at one end, the blade is fixed and at the other a small flat slab of wood which is always ornamented with a pattern of lines and dots drawn in yellow, white and black, the resin being always red-ochred (Figs. 235–240). This wooden-hafted knife is only met with, except very

rarely, amongst the more northern tribes such as the Warramunga and Tjingilli. The Arunta have only the simpler resin-hafted form.

There is one special kind of knife that we only saw in use amongst the women of the Warramunga and Kaitish tribes, though of course it is quite possible that it may be more widely distributed. It has a short, stout and very rudely-flaked blade of quartzite stone, calling to mind, in its general appearance, the better class of stone implements used by the lost Tasmanian race, except that it is hafted with a small mass of porcupine-grass resin. It is really only a very rude flake with a large number of irregular, conchoidal facets chipped in such a way that a fairly good cutting edge was produced, though as a general rule it is more useful as a scraper than as a true cutting implement (Figs. 232, 233, 234). It is quite possible that this may represent the original, primitive form of stone knife used amongst the early ancestors and now lingering on amongst the women, who are never allowed to possess the better flaked forms. It is at all events a very striking fact that, if these tribes had lived in pre-historic times, and had passed away, as did the people of the Stone Age in other parts of the world, giving place to those who had reached a higher state of culture, the only remnants that they would have left behind them would have been their stone implements; and amongst these would have been found flakes as crude as those of the Tasmanians, chipped and flaked knives and spear-heads of paleolithic form, and side by side with these, ground stone axes of neolithic form.

We naturally know nothing very definite about the ancient Stone Age people in other parts of the world, except that they used stone implements. Everything else has vanished, but we shall probably not be far from right in picturing them as leading very much the same life as



Fig. 230. STONE KNIFE WITH IRREGULAR FLAKINGS AND SECONDARY CHIPPING ALL ROUND THE TOP, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

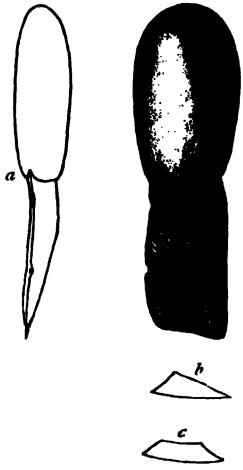


Fig. 231. STONE KNIFE WITH FLINT BLADE, WITH FOUR FACETS, THE FOURTH FORMING A BROAD TERMINAL CUTTING EDGE, ARUNTA TRIBE.

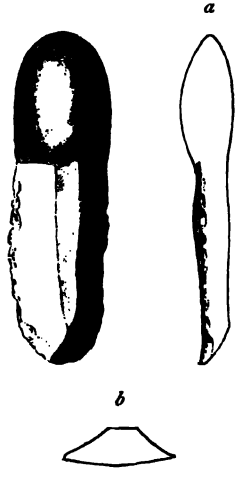


Fig. 232. WOMAN'S STONE KNIFE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

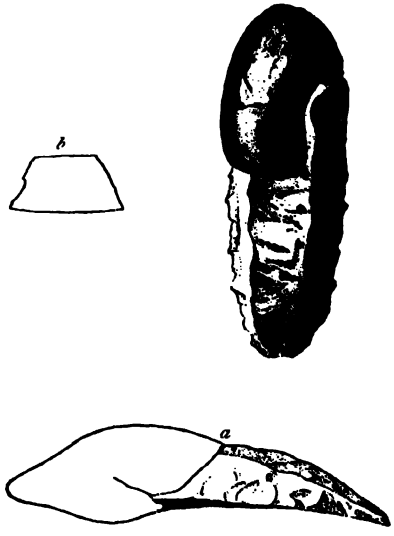


Fig. 233. WOMAN'S STONE KNIFE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

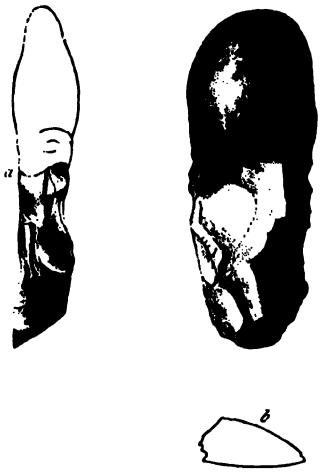


Fig. 234. WOMAN'S STONE KNIFE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

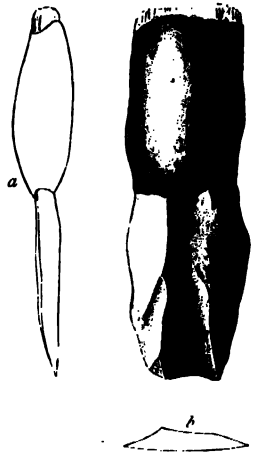


Fig. 235. STONE KNIFE WITH VERY SHORT WOODEN HAFT, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
The blade is very irregularly flaked, a broad facet extending to the end and forming a cutting edge.

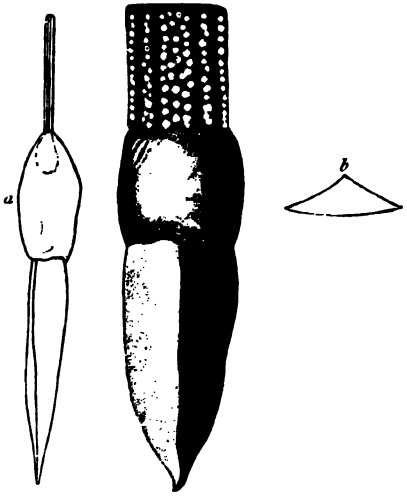


Fig. 236. WOODEN-HAFTED STONE KNIFE WITH VERY REGULARLY FLAKED QUARTZITE BLADE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

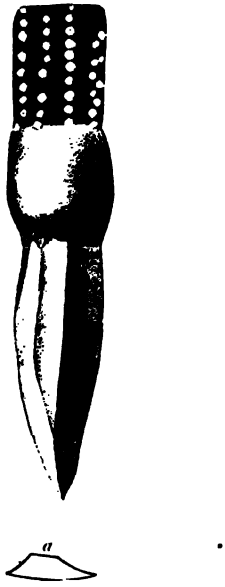


Fig. 237. WOODEN-HAFTED STONE KNIFE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

the Australian savage does at the present day. Like the latter, they presumably had their camps, shifting about from place to place in search of food, and spending much of their spare time in performing ceremonies which were, probably, closely similar to those that the Australian Stone Age men now perform. Australia, in fact, isolated as it has been for long ages past, has preserved for us a more or less unchanged remnant of primitive mankind, exactly as it has done in the case of many of the lower animals. If it were not for Australia we should know nothing of the lowest form of mammals, save their fossil bones; and so, in just the same way, we should know nothing, or next to nothing, of the manner of life of the most primitive communities of human beings.

Amongst the Warramunga we sometimes came across a curious pick-like instrument which, however, though it is not very common anywhere, is not confined to this tribe (Figs. 241, 242). Its native name is Kulungu, and it consists of a flaked stone, precisely similar to that used in a knife. It is hafted in one of two ways. One method consists in fixing it in the cleft end of a stick (Fig. 241), which is then enclosed in a lump of resin. A second method is to enclose it in a bent withy, in exactly the same way as is adopted in the case of the ground-axe (Fig. 242). There is one curious feature about these picks, and the stone knives also, which is that they always look quite new and show little or no sign of use. They never have a trace of blood on them, and yet the knives at all events are continually being used. The fact is that blood does not easily attach itself to quartzite, and in addition to this each knife, after being used, is carefully cleaned. Those now in our possession, which we actually saw in use during the mourning and initiation ceremonies amongst the Warra-

munga tribe, are perfectly clean and look as if they had been newly made.

The points of all the flaked implements are, of course, very liable to be broken, and the blade is usually protected by a sheath made of very thin strips of bark cut from an acacia tree or, in the far north, from a special "paper-bark" Ti-tree (*Melaleuca leucodendron*). The strips are placed lengthwise along the blade and are then wound closely round and round with fur or vegetable string. The whole surface is covered with pipe-clay, and a small bunch of red-ochred emu or cockatoo feathers is inserted at the end (Fig. 243). When the former are used, about twenty or thirty of them are attached, always by their free tips, to a short stick an inch or two long, so that, when this is inserted in the sheath, the quills form a radiating bunch projecting from the end. Neither the design on the wooden haft, nor the little bunch of feathers, are of any use, but they are interesting as showing that even primitive mankind has cravings after something which, according to his ideas, shall be beautiful as well as useful.

Amongst the stone-headed spears we met with three types in the camp, although only two of these are actually made by the Warramunga (Figs. 244–246). In one of them, by far the most common form, the head is made of quartzite. It is, in fact, precisely similar to the flaked knife. In the second the quartzite is replaced by a chipped piece of a slate rock. The third is one which is only manufactured in the far north and north-west and is traded down as far south as the Kaitish and Unmatjera tribes. The head is made of a small lanceolate-shaped piece of opalescent quartzite, which is very carefully chipped so as to have a fine tapering point and serrated edge. This is by far the most beautiful example of chipped implement met with in the whole of Australia. Very often, at the present day,

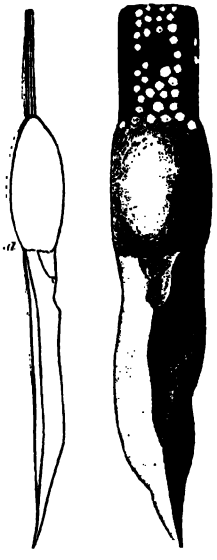


Fig. 238. WOODEN-HAFTED STONE KNIFE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 239. WOODEN-HAFTED STONE KNIFE WITH IRREGULAR FLAKING AND THE BLADE SMALL IN COMPARISON TO THE HANDLE.

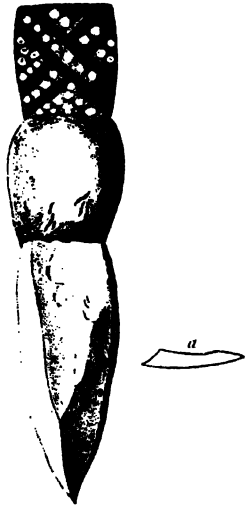


Fig. 240. WOODEN-HAFTED STONE KNIFE SHOWING SECONDARY CHIPPINGS, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

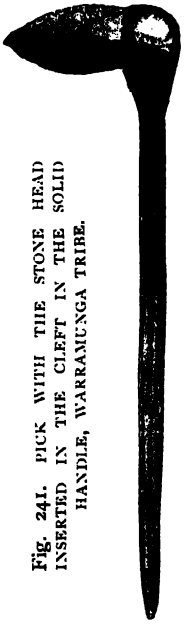


Fig. 241. PICK WITH THE STONE HEAD INSERTED IN THE CLEFT IN THE SOLID HANDLE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 242. PICKS WITH THE STONE HEADS SURROUNDED BY A BENT WITHY, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE

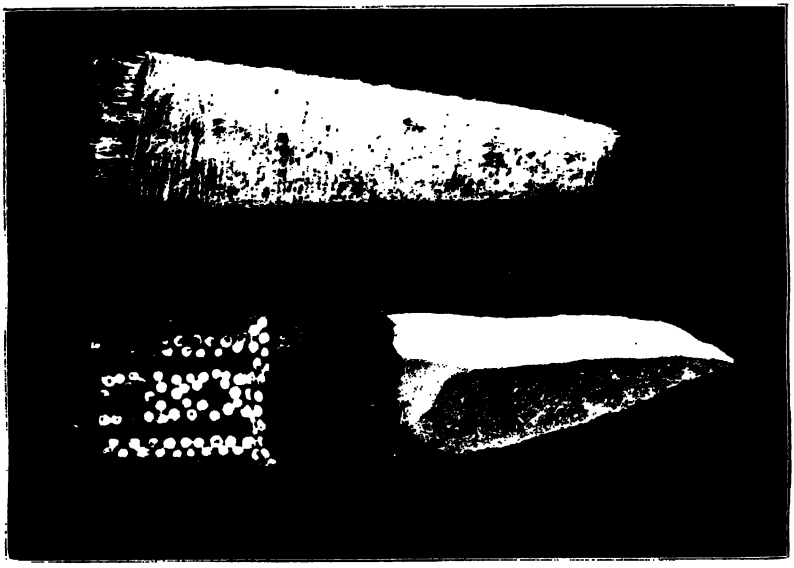


Fig. 243. STONE KNIFE WITH ITS SHEATH.

the stone is replaced by glass or by a portion of a broken telegraph insulator, decidedly to the detriment of the line. Beer, whisky, square-gin and the blue glass of Eno's Fruit Salt bottles are all utilised for the purpose, and the nature of the glass readily shows its source of origin.

We were continually astonished at the regularity of form shown by many of the wooden bowls and troughs, and it was a constant source of wonder to us how the natives could make them with such crude stone implements. So far as material is concerned, these bowls, or pitchis as the natives call them, fall into three groups : one manufactured from the bark of a gum tree, a second from the soft wood of the bean tree, and a third from the solid, hard wood of the gum tree. The bark pitchi is only a roughly fashioned trough, the shape of which depends upon that of the trunk of the tree from which it has been cut (Fig. 213). It is always shallow and widely open at each end, both the inner and outer surfaces being marked with coarse, irregular groovings made by a large flint. By the side of Tennant Creek, close to the main camp, there was a tree, represented in Fig. 212, from the bark of which one of these pitchis had recently been cut. This pitchi was used during the ceremonies for holding birds'-down, gypsum and red ochre, employed in the decoration of the performers.

The soft-wood pitchis (Figs. 251–256) are made with comparative ease, because the wood of the bean tree out of which they are manufactured can be manipulated without much difficulty. A solid block is first of all cut from the tree with a ground stone axe and then chipped down roughly to the required shape. This, however, varies much according to the purpose for which it is to be used. There are, generally speaking, two main types of soft-wood pitchis, one being more or less shallow and trough-

shaped, the other boat-shaped. The first type is shown in Fig. 251. It may be either very shallow, with almost flat, open ends, or the ends and sides may be curved up, to a greater or lesser extent, the extreme form being shown in Fig. 256, in which the two sides actually curve over. As a general rule the outer surface is marked by fine grooves that run parallel to one another from end to end, the inner surface being smooth or perhaps marked with wide shallow grooves. Very often these pitchis are pointed at their ends, and they are all typically coated with red ochre and often decorated with designs in yellow ochre, charcoal and white pipe-clay. The boat-shaped pitchis (Figs. 257, 258) are very characteristic of the Warramunga and neighbouring tribes, and look just as if they were made to float in water. In reality no member of the Warramunga tribe has ever seen such a thing as a boat, for which they have no use whatever, as the small creeks that cross their country rarely contain flowing water. The pitchis vary in length from less than a foot to as much as four feet, and are always constructed so that they will stand upright on the ground and can be rocked about from side to side without any danger of their overturning. They are used for carrying food and water, but, for the latter purpose, the trough with inturned sides (Fig. 256) is the most useful form. One day we came across a native who was busily employed making one of these pitchis (Fig. 219). All the rough work had been done and, holding the pitchi between his knees, he was patiently engaged making groove after groove along its outer surface with an adze. The sides were supported by two staves. We had considerable difficulty in persuading him to part with it in the unfinished state; in fact all articles in process of manufacture are very difficult to obtain. A native, who is an adept at manufacturing any special implement, is



Fig. 244. STONE-HEADED SPEAR, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 245. SLATE-HEADED SPEAR.



Fig. 246. SPEAR WITH HEAD OF FINELY CHIPPED OPALINE QUARTZITE, KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 247. HARD-WOOD PITCHI, ARUNTA TRIBE.



Fig. 248. HARD-WOOD PITCHI, ARUNTA TRIBE.



Fig. 249. HARD-WOOD PITCHI OF VERY SYMMETRICAL FORM. WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 250. HARD-WOOD PITCHI OF VERY SYMMETRICAL FORM, WITH THE SIDES HIGH, KAITISH TRIBE.

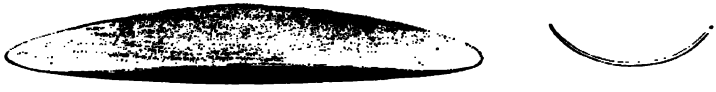


Fig. 251. SHALLOW SOFT-WOOD PITCHI, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

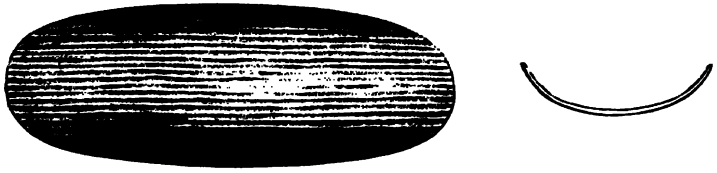


Fig. 252 SOFT-WOOD PITCHI, SHIELD-SHAPED IN DORSAL VIEW, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 253. SOFT-WOOD PITCHI, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE

very proud of his handiwork, in which he takes the deepest interest, sparing no time or trouble to make it as good as possible ; and this man was very unwilling to part with his pitchi because he evidently felt that it might reflect discredit upon him if it were not as perfect as he could make it.

The hard-wood pitchis (Figs. 247–250) are really marvellous pieces of workmanship. They vary in size as much as the boat-shaped ones do, and are infinitely more difficult to make than the latter. The hewing of a block of wood, by means of a blunt stone axe, out of the trunk of a gum tree is no light task, and, when once this has been accomplished, there follows the carving of the block to make the hollow trough. This has to be done painfully, and laboriously, flake by flake, and chip by chip, using only the curved edge of a flint. Sometimes, as might be expected, they are somewhat irregular in form, though never strikingly so (Fig. 248), whilst, on the other hand, many of them are of perfectly symmetrical form, the two represented in Figs. 249 and 250 being beautiful examples of simple, native workmanship. The wood out of which they are made is so hard that it is not easily cut with a knife, and yet, in each of them, the symmetry of form is absolutely perfect. The sides are turned up so as to produce a really graceful outline, and as this does not actually make the pitchi more useful and entails a vast amount of trouble, it is evident that the symmetrical form, the long lines of parallel grooves and the curved outline, must afford pleasure to the native in just the same way that the more elaborate carving on implements, such as those of the Maories, indicates the fact that the New Zealand native appreciates beauty of curve and outline.

There was plenty of variety in the life in the native camp at Tennant Creek, quite apart from the performance of

ceremonies that went on day after day, and, as we wandered about among the natives, we were constantly coming across something new and interesting. The weather was very trying, and apparently it seemed to affect even the natives. One morning when the wind was blowing strong and hot, with clouds of sand sweeping across the plain, we saw a man sitting on the ground by the side of his mia-mia looking very disconsolate and miserable. He was wearing two or three of the head rings which are characteristic of the women (Fig. 259) and was evidently suffering from headache. We found that the head rings belonged to his wife, and that he was wearing them under the belief that the pain in his head, from which he was suffering, would be transferred to the rings and then he could throw them away and be free from it. We saw him again an hour or two later, when he had recovered from his headache, which had been successfully transferred to the rings and, along with them, had been thrown away amongst the bushes surrounding the camp where, next day, his wife went in search of them.

One evening we heard a great noise in the camp, and on enquiry discovered that one of the lubras had been doing something of which her husband did not approve, and, by way of correction, he was chastising her with a fire-stick. It was useless for us to interfere, and all that we could do was to give one of the older women some oil with which to dress the burns. In all probability the old woman drank this herself and "sang" the wounds, which were anointed with grease and pipe-clay. Next day we saw the patient, who was quite cheerful, despite a few ugly scars on her legs. They are all so accustomed to cutting themselves that they do not apparently think much of wounds that would disable an ordinary white woman for a month or two.



Fig. 254. SOFT-WOOD PITCHI, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

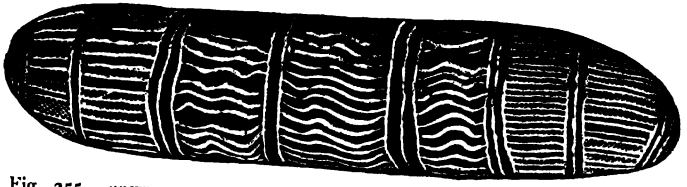


Fig. 255. SOFT-WOOD PITCHI DECORATED WITH A GEOMETRICAL DESIGN DRAWN IN PIPE-CLAY, KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 256. VERY DEEP SOFT-WOOD PITCHI, USED FOR CARRYING WATER IN, KAITISH TRIBE.



Fig. 257. BOAT-SHAPED PITCHI, WARRAMU'NGA TRIBE.

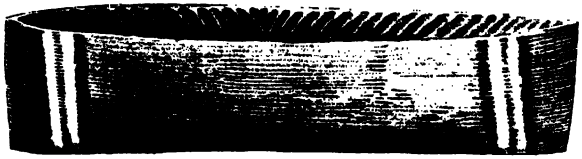


Fig. 258. BOAT-SHAPED PITCHI, WARRAMU'NGA TRIBE.



Fig. 259. MAN WEARING WOMAN'S HEAD-RINGS AS A MAGIC CURE FOR HEADACHE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

On another evening we saw a big fire lighted in the main camp. A number of men were standing round it, all jabbering at the top of their voices, and, above all the noise, we could hear the piercing yells of a boy. It turned out that they were giving the latter a fright, and that really it was all what they call "monkey yabber," that is they did not mean to do anything serious and were only pretending—though it was a very good pretence—to be in earnest. The boy had done something that was against tribal law, so one or two of the older men talked the matter over and decided to give him a lesson. Accordingly they caught him and took him to the fire, telling him that they were going to roast him. The boy had no idea that they were not thoroughly in earnest, and, judging by his yells when they held him near the fire, he bitterly regretted his misdeeds. After giving him a fright they set to work, and for half an hour lectured him on tribal laws in general and the particular one he had broken in great detail. When they were a little bit tired and he was thoroughly repentant, they let him go, and it is very unlikely that he will repeat the offence.

As a general rule the natives were perfectly friendly with one another, but, every now and again, quarrels arose and, for a time, the harmony of the camp life was seriously disturbed. On the afternoon of the day on which, in the early hours of the morning, some special ceremonies had come to an end, and when we thought that everybody was too tired-out to do anything—we had been up all night with the natives—a great disturbance arose quite suddenly in the camp. We were taking advantage of what we thought was a lull in the proceedings to develop some of our photographs, but, as soon as we heard the noise, we left them and went down to the

camp, where all the natives were assembled in a state of great excitement. What was the original cause of the quarrel we could not find out—probably it was some very trivial matter—but within a very few minutes every man, woman and child was on the ground, and the excitement was so great that we thought it discreet to stand on one side and watch matters more or less from the outside. It was a very ludicrous sight. One man would suddenly, apparently for no special reason, begin to yell and prance around, and with two or three others hanging on to him, try in vain to hurl a boomerang at some one else, whose arms were most likely held by other men. Every now and again a man would succeed in letting one fly, but it was easily warded off with a shield. The women meanwhile were prancing about and yelling at the top of their voices. As soon as ever any particular man was attacked, up rushed all his female relatives with their fighting clubs, and round and round him they danced to prevent him from being hurt. This was not with any idea that his opponents would hesitate, from a feeling of chivalry, to attack him lest they should hurt a woman, because the Australian native has no such feeling in regard to women ; it was simply a matter of custom. Things got fast and furious, and any one would have thought, from the noise, that at least half a dozen men had been seriously wounded, and yet no one was touched, except some of the old women who deliberately poked the ends of their yam sticks into the top of their heads, which is a way they have when they get excited. Some of the men, meanwhile, had run back to their camps for their stone knives and rushed on to the ground, yelling and brandishing them about, and we thought, time after time, that a serious fight must take place. The main mass of men and women were grouped to one side, while



Fig. 260. TOOTH-KNOCKING-OUT CEREMONIES: WOMEN DRINKING WATER, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

any one who felt inclined to take an active part in the discussion ran out, howling and prancing about to his heart's content, no one paying any special heed to any one else, but each one trying to attract the attention of the onlookers. It was a ludicrous sight, and the way in which they kept up the pretence of fury without any one being damaged was remarkable. After about two hours the noise began to grow less, and one by one the men and women dropped out of the crowd and went back to their own camps; but it was quite four hours before all was quiet, and during the evening there was an unwonted silence in all the camps, for every one was thoroughly tired out.

Not far away from the main camp there was a pool of water, by the side of which the ceremony of knocking out young women's teeth was performed. Fortunately, we had the opportunity of seeing this done. The pool was about a quarter of a mile away from the ceremonial ground where the men were performing, so the women had to walk a long way round lest they should, by chance, see the men preparing for a ceremony. When we reached the waterhole we found about thirty women and children gathered together. They had lighted a fire, as the water was cool and the air chilly.

Four of them, who were to be operated upon, went into the water, two by two (Figs. 260, 261, 262). First of all they filled their mouths with water, spitting it out after a short time. Then they threw water over their heads and, having done this, came out on to the bank, where the other women were watching and waiting for them. Each one, as soon as she had come out, lay down on some gum-tree twigs, and then one young woman pushed the gum back from the tooth with a small piece of bone, and another immediately

afterwards knocked the tooth out with a pointed stick which she struck smartly with a stone. She was an excellent dentist and, except in one instance, the tooth came out with the first blow. As soon as the operation was over, the patients put a small pad of heated gum leaves in their mouths, which is supposed to soothe the pain. They also say that the cold water numbs the gum and prevents them feeling the blow very much.

We were wondering what would be done with the tooth. In the Kaitish tribe it is thrown away in the direction of the camp which the patient's mother inhabited during the Alcheringa; in the Warramunga its fate is very curious. If it be a woman's tooth, as it was on this occasion, it is taken back to the camp, where it is pounded up between two stones, mixed with a little meat of some kind, and then eaten by the girl's actual mother, or, if the latter be not alive, by a tribal mother. If it be a man's tooth its fate is still more curious. It is pounded up and must be eaten by his mother-in-law—which is perhaps the most extraordinary use for a mother-in-law that any Australian tribe has devised.

The natives were always very anxious that we should see everything, and this sometimes resulted in our spending a good many uncomfortable hours watching rather dreary performances of no particular interest; but of course we never let them know this, as otherwise we might have missed something of importance. One morning, when we were peacefully slumbering, one of our special friends awoke us at 3 a.m. saying that a most important ceremony was being enacted. It was decidedly chilly, but fortunately we took our rugs with us, and, stumbling along in the dark, reached the ceremonial ground. There we found that a ceremony was in progress, the object of which was to secure an increase in the numbers



Fig. 261. TOOTH-KNOCKING-OUT CEREMONIES: FORCING THE GUM BACK, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

of white cockatoos. At that time of the day we did not feel personally inclined to take any special interest in white cockatoos, but it was evidently a very serious matter to the natives. The ceremony consisted in, at first one man and, later on, two standing up and crying out without more than a few minutes' cessation, "Hak-hak ha-ha-ak ha-ak hak." It was a most excellent imitation of the cry of the white cockatoos, but, after hours of repetition, it grew very monotonous. The performance started at 3 a.m. and ended at 7 a.m. At its close the old leader—the head man of the white cockatoo totem—had subsided on the ground with only a faint squeak left in him, while his companion—a younger man—was not much better. As for us, after the first hour we wrapped our rugs round us and lay down on the hard ground, wishing that every white cockatoo in the country was shot and stuffed. At 7 a.m. the performance came to a close with a ceremony in which a man of the totem wore on his head a small object, ornamented with cockatoo down, which was supposed to represent the bird. After having seen this, it was believed that all the white cockatoos in the land would forthwith begin to lay eggs.

There were many little bits of interesting by-play in connection with these ceremonies. One day while some fifteen men were preparing for a snake ceremony, rubbing one another over with grease and charcoal and red ochre, one of the older men got up and, without saying a word to any one, went off to his camp. We thought nothing of it till about a quarter of an hour later, when we were astonished to see him return armed with six boomerangs, a fighting club and a knife. Without any warning he began to brandish the boomerangs about, prancing and yelling all the time. Thinking that, in the circum-

stances, discretion was the better part of valour, we moved out of the firing line. On enquiry we found that this particular man had the right to rub grease and red ochre on one of the performers, but that some one else had usurped his place. Amongst these natives precedence counts for very much, and the old man could not remain passive under what he considered an insult to his dignity. For about ten minutes he was like a raging tornado, every one else remaining wonderfully calm and unconcerned. We went and talked to him, and he gradually quieted down, and after, for some reason, presenting us with a very greasy fur-string necklet that he was wearing, he went and took his place among the men, squatting on the ground with his arm round the neck of the very man whom, five minutes before, he was prepared to kill.

On another occasion, whilst a number of men were busy decorating one another, we saw a quaint little ceremony that puzzled us considerably until its meaning was explained to us. Without any apparent warning of what he intended to do, though as a matter of fact there had been a previous consultation, one man arose, cut a small lock of hair from the whiskers of another man and presented this to a third man, who placed it beneath his arm band. The meaning of this was that the second man, whose hair was cut, would present the third man, to whom the hair was given, with a wife, who would be the sister of the man by whom the hair was cut. It is no uncommon thing amongst these tribes to see men thus carrying locks of hair. At a later time, often many years after, because a woman is often betrothed before she is born, the lock of hair is given to and carried by her, serving as a sign, both to her and to others, that she is promised to another man and as a kind of



Fig. 262. TOOTH-KNOCKING-OUT CEREMONIES: WOMAN PUTTING WATER OVER HER HEAD, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

(p. 385.)



Fig. 263. TJINQUROKORA, A WATERHOLE IN THE TENNANT CREEK WHERE THE ANCESTOR OF THE BLACK-SNAKE TOTEMIC GROUP AROSE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

No member of the totem may drink water here.

(p. 396.)

magic charm to defend her against the advances of other men.

The ceremonies connected with hair are very numerous. In some Australian tribes the greatest care is taken to prevent any one from becoming possessed of even the smallest lock of hair cut from the head of any other individual—under the idea that the possessor of the hair would be able to injure, by magic, the man from whom it had been cut. In the tribes inhabiting Central Australia there is no such belief, and practically every individual, at some time or other of his or her life, possesses hair that has been cut from the head of some one else.

After the mourning ceremonies in the Warramunga tribe, a number of the men had their hair cropped quite close, and we were much struck with the curious appearance of their scalps. Instead of being smooth they were thrown into regular folds, looking just as if a rope were coiled about under the skin. The explanation of this is that, often for months together, the hair is tied up very tightly with fur string in such a way that the movable skin of the scalp is pressed into a comparatively small compass on the crown of the head and, as it were, "sets" in rolls. All the men's scalps that we examined were like this. The women's were quite different. It is not their duty to tie their hair up: on the other hand it must frequently be cut. One of the things that struck us most, while wandering around the Warramunga camp, was the fact that so many of the women were under a ban of silence. Many times when we spoke to a woman she signified, by putting her finger to her lips, that she was not allowed to speak. If four men, each of them belonging to a different class, happened to die within a short time of one another there would not

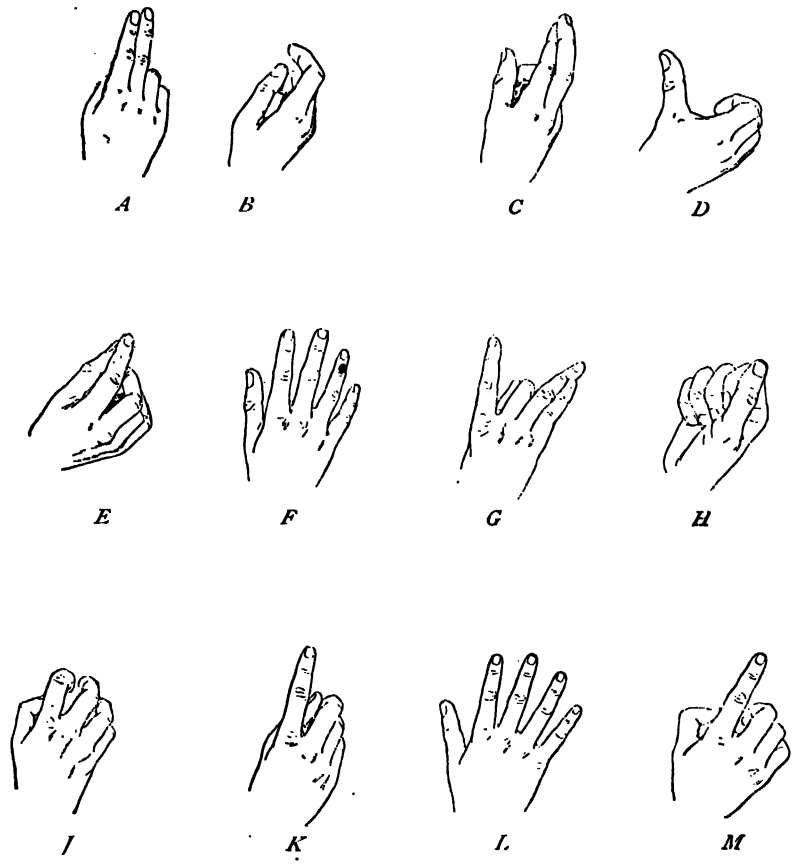
be a single woman in the whole camp who would be able to utter a word.

The women did not seem to mind in the least, and those who were under the ban of silence chatted away gaily on their fingers. Without making any sound, except that of laughing, they easily communicated with one another by means of their remarkable system of gesture language. Their conversation deals with matters of a concrete rather than with those of an abstract nature, and it is simply wonderful to watch the way in which they can express themselves. It is not a case, as it is with the deaf and dumb amongst ourselves, of spelling words by means of finger movements, each one of which indicates a letter. They have not reached the state of culture at which an alphabet, that is a series of signs forming the elements of a written language, exists. The words that they use are merely of collection of vocal sounds, each of which has a definite significance, and by combining these vocal sounds in various ways, they are able to communicate with one another; but they have no idea of any written signs corresponding to the sounds. The figures on p. 391 and the short description of them will give some idea of this gesture language, one advantage of which is that it serves as a kind of universal language by means of which natives, who speak different dialects, can communicate with one another. These particular signs are a few of those that we gathered in the Arunta and Luritja tribes, but they are practically identical with those of the Warramunga and other tribes in the Centre of Australia.[1]

Figs. *A* and *B* represent two different signs for a small kangaroo; in the second the hand is moved as if the

[1] The signs here described were collected by us during the Horn Expedition, and were published in the Anthropological section of the Report of that expedition.

speaker had hold of the tail between the thumb and fore-finger and were pulling the animal back. Fig. *C* shows the sign for a kangaroo rat. Finger 3 overlaps finger 2;



fingers 4 and 5 are bent, and finger 1 is in contact with the terminal joint of 4. The hand is moved in imitation of the animal hopping. Fig. *D* is the sign for an opossum. The hand is held with the thumb upwards and bent back as far as possible, while the other fingers

are closed in upon the palm, the whole effect being to imitate the foot of the opossum. If the opossum is up a tree and visible, a slight jerking movement is added. Fig. *E* represents one of several signs for a native dog or dingo. The first and second fingers are in contact, and the hand is moved in imitation of a dog moving forward with a bounding motion. In another sign the hand is held prone, that is, with the palm down. Finger 2 is loosely extended or slightly bent. The tips of fingers 3 and 1 are in contact, and fingers 4 and 5 are bent upon the palm. The hand in this position is moved in imitation of the wagging of a dog's tail.

The position for the hand in the sign for a camel is seen in Fig. *F*. The fingers are all extended and the whole are moved from the shoulder, as if it were the leg of the animal. The speaker moves his own head and neck slightly, but so as to imply exactly the characteristic movement of those of a camel. A small jerk is given to the hand which suggests unmistakably the way in which its foot is set down on the ground. There are several signs for an emu. In the one shown in Fig. *G* finger 2 is extended, finger 3 is bent and is in contact with finger 1. Fingers 4 and 5 are extended and in contact, as represented. A slight up-and-down movement of the head suggests the walk of the emu. In connection with the one shown in Fig. *H* the closed hand was supposed to represent the head, and it was moved up and down so as to represent its movements when the bird walked. An eagle-hawk was indicated by holding the fingers as shown in Fig. *J*, the fingers being crooked like the talons of a bird. The hand is moved as if it were pouncing down upon its prey, the fingers being closed when the hand is at the bottom of the strike. Afterwards the hand is lifted up as if it were holding the prey. There are



Fig. 264. RELEASING A WOMAN FROM THE BAN OF SILENCE.

several signs for lizards, three of which are shown in Figs. *K*, *L*, and *M*. In Fig. *K* the second finger is extended, the others are loosely bunched together, the extended forefinger being moved from side to side to imitate the waggling of the tail. This is used for small lizards, in which the tail is one of the most prominent features. In Fig. *L* the fingers are all extended, and the hand is lifted up and down to imitate the movement of the feet. This is used in connection with the very large lizard called the Parenthie (*Varanus giganteus*) the size of which (it may reach a length of seven or eight feet) is the most striking feature, and this is evidently attempted to be expressed by the wide spread of the fingers. One movement in a third sign for forms of large size, though smaller than the Parenthie, is seen in Fig. *M*. It is really a combination of the signs for the latter animal and the smaller species. All the fingers are first extended, and then fingers 1, 3, 4 and 5 are bent inwards, but not quite so much as in Fig. *K*, and finger 2, which remains extended, is moved to imitate the waggling of the tail. To indicate sleep, the hand is held with the palm uppermost, and the first and second fingers are placed so that the tips of the first finger rest on the last joint of finger 2. The other three fingers are turned down under the palm. The hand is then raised so that the tip of finger 2 points towards the eye, after which a downward jerk of the hand in front of each eye indicates the closing of the lids. The hand is then brought down with the first and second fingers pointing towards the ground to indicate the action of lying down. To indicate a fire-stick the fingers are bunched together in such a way that the tip of the first rests on those of the others, the hand being then moved to and from the mouth.

In the use of gesture language a great deal is of course

left to the imagination. The sign for a lizard, for example, may, in certain circumstances, mean that the individual using the sign has seen one of these animals while out in the bush in search of food; or, when in camp, wishes to have one to eat; or, in quite different circumstances, it may be the means of indicating the fact that he belongs to the lizard totem.

As a general rule the women are released from their ban within a few months, or at most a year. One day, when we were wandering about the camp at Tennant Creek, we saw a little ceremony which consisted in a man and woman standing side by side while the former held out his hand for the latter to bite (Fig. 264). In this simple way the woman was released from the ban, but she had to present the man with an offering of food. Occasionally the women prefer to remain under the ban for a long time, and amongst the Warramunga there was one old woman who, from choice, had not spoken a word for twenty-five years (Fig. 204). She was very ancient and decrepit when we saw her, and before this she has probably gone to her grave without uttering a word. The ban of silence does not, unfortunately, preclude a woman from wailing, and night after night we used to hear the weird wailing for the dead. The spirit of a dead person is supposed to haunt the old camping-ground, and to be gratified if it sees or hears that its old companions are properly performing the mourning ceremonies. Not only is the spirit supposed to be hovering around, but the time that immediately follows upon a death in the camp is one during which the natives are very excited and very imaginative. They have a very firm belief in the existence of evil beings, who are commonly known as Kurdaitcha, and are supposed to prowl around with the object of killing their enemies by means of magic. One



Fig. 265. BEGINNING TO DECORATE THE BODIES OF PERFORMERS, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

The outline of a band is being indicated in grease.

(p. 397).



Fig. 266. PREPARATION FOR A CEREMONY IN CONNECTION WITH THE BLACK-SNAKE TOTEM, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

(p. 397).

evening, when we were spending a quiet hour or two writing up our notes, we suddenly heard two shots fired, and found that one of our black boys had been aiming with his revolver at what he supposed to be a Kurdaitcha coming up to the camp under cover of darkness. The noise of course attracted the natives, and in a very short space of time a dozen men rushed up, armed to the teeth, and, with the courage inspired by numbers, set out in pursuit of the Kurdaitcha. An hour or two later we heard the gallant party returning, and learnt that they had seen no fewer than four and had succeeded in driving them away. The supposed Kurdaitchas were purely fictions of their imagination—probably they were white-ant mounds—but the natives retired to rest fully convinced that they had saved the camp, ourselves included, from an attack which, but for their valour, would have had most serious results.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GREAT WOLLUNQUA

THE Warramunga believe just as firmly in the existence of mythical ancestors as do the Arunta. In the far past time that they speak of as "Wingara," these ancestors are supposed to have walked about the country, making all the natural features that are visible to-day. They were half-animals or half-plants, as the case may be, only, instead of a lot of kangaroos, or emus, or snakes, marching about together, as we meet with in the Arunta tales, according to the Warramunga tribe there was usually only one individual. In the Arunta some of the ancestors went down into the ground, that is died and left their spirit parts behind at various places; but, in the Warramunga, the one great ancestor was provided with a large number of small spirits which he carried about with him and deposited when he came to suitable places. Some striking natural feature, easily seen by the natives, such as a waterhole, a prominent rock or a large gum tree, always arose to mark the places at which he rested and left his spirits behind. The Warramunga perform ceremonies commemorative of these ancestors, just as the Arunta and in fact all the native tribes inhabiting Central Australia do, and the time occupied by their performance may run into months. The Warramunga tribe is divided into two moieties, only in the Warram-

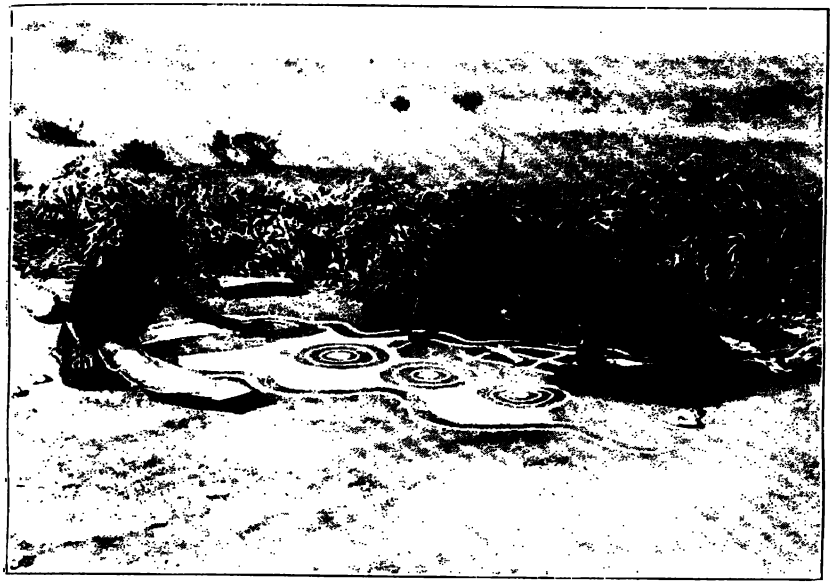


Fig. 267. PREPARING A GROUND-DRAWING IN CONNECTION WITH A CEREMONY OF THE BLACK-SNAKE TOTEM, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 268. THE AUDIENCE GATHERING ROUND THE PERFORMERS AT THE CLOSE OF A CEREMONY CONNECTED WITH THE BLACK-SNAKE TOTEM, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 269. CLOSE OF A CEREMONY CONNECTED WITH THE BLACK-SNAKE TOTEM.

An old man with his arm round the waist of a youth who has just been initiated, and to whom he is explaining the meaning of the ceremony On the right hand one of the audience is in the act of pulling a head-dress off one of the performers.

unga, unlike the Arunta, they have distinct names; one is called Uluuru and the other Kingilli, and one set of ceremonies is associated with the Uluuru and the other with the Kingilli. Whilst we were staying among them we saw no fewer than eighty-eight of these sacred ceremonies performed. They began on July 27th, and on Sept. 17th, when we were obliged to leave them, they were by no means completed. Sometimes there was only one ceremony during the twenty-four hours, but the number varied up to as many as nine on one occasion, representing eight different totemic groups. There are one or two curious features about them, as compared with those of the Arunta. In the latter each totemic group has its sacred ceremonies, but they may be performed singly and in any order. In the Warramunga the old totemic ancestor is supposed to have wandered across the country, his line of travel is well-known, and when his descendants perform the ceremonies at the present day they must begin at the beginning and go steadily through. Thus, for example, in the case of the black snake and the Wollunqua, the series which we saw enacted began right at the beginning of the recorded history of the snake and went completely through to the end of his wanderings. In the Arunta tribe one or any number of them would be performed in any order.

The illustrations referring to the black snake, called Thalaualla, may be taken as fairly representative of a series of ceremonies connected with the Uluuru (Figs. 265–270). The old snake arose at a waterhole called Tjinqurokora, which lies in a curious conglomerate formation about a mile away from the station along the course of Tennant Creek (Fig. 263). The decorations consisted partly of designs on the body—a curved red band very often representing the snake itself—and

partly of ground-drawings (Fig. 267). In every case, when they were decorated, the performers went about two hundred yards away from the ceremonial ground and hid behind bushes. The Uluuru men were summoned, and when they appeared, the performers emerged from their hiding places and ran in to the ceremonial ground, stopping every now and then to shake their bodies. On reaching the ground they always sat down—on the top of the design, if one had been drawn—while the other men clustered round them and bent their heads down, removing their head-dresses and then stroking the drawing of the snake. This little ceremony is called Irrimunta and is supposed to soothe the snake (Figs. 269, 270).

A Kingilli ceremony can always be distinguished from one of the Uluuru by its different ending (Figs. 271–276). The performer, who always wears some kind of helmet, and carries bunches of leafy twigs tied to each thigh, runs in with exaggerated high knee-action and then circles round and round one of the Uluuru men, who stands in the middle of the ceremonial ground. The circle grows smaller and smaller, until he is quite close to the central, standing man, who then rapidly and apparently roughly knocks the helmet off and catches the performer as he tumbles to the ground.

Amongst the Arunta tribe all their original totemic ancestors are supposed to have died in the Alcheringa, and the same is true of all except two in the Warramunga. One of them is a curious creature known as Thaballa, or the laughing boy (Fig. 271), who can even now be heard laughing by any one who goes to a place called Yappakulinia, where he dwells among the rocks.

The other is a gigantic snake called Wollunqua, which gives its name to one of the most important totemic groups. In the Wingara it arose at a place called



Fig. 270. CEREMONY OF IRRIMUNTA, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
Stroking the drawing of the snake on the back of the performers.



Fig. 271. MAN PERFORMING A CEREMONY OF THE THABALLA OR LAUGHING-BOY TOTEM, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 272. CEREMONY OF WILD-CAT (*Dasyurus sp.*) TOTEM, WALPARI TRIBE.
The long, trailing pendant is supposed to represent the animal's tail.



Fig. 273. CEREMONY OF A LIZARD TOTEM, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
The man in front is making a track on the sand with a boomerang. The performer is following the track.

Thapauerlu, a rocky waterhole in the Murchison Range. Stretching itself out as far as it could, whilst its tail remained in the hole, its body extended over a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles. It halted at various places performing ceremonies and leaving spirit individuals behind, who are now born in the form of men and women. Finally it reared itself up into the sky and, with one gigantic plunge into the ground, returned to Thapauerlu. The first Wollunqua ceremony was enacted on July 27th and the last on September 11th, and altogether they certainly formed by far the most elaborate and impressive series that we witnessed in any tribe. It must be remembered that the Wollunqua is supposed to be still alive in its home at Thapauerlu, and there is always the fear that it may take it into its head to come out and do some damage. On one particular occasion it had been known, apparently for no special reason, to kill a number of natives, though on another occasion the men were able to drive it off. That the natives genuinely fear it may be gathered from the fact that, instead of using the name Wollunqua when speaking about it, among themselves, they call it Urkulu napparinnia, because, so they told us, if they were to call it too often by its real name, they would lose all control over it and it would come out and eat them all up. Urkulu is the general term for snake and napparinnia means "belonging to the water," evidently in allusion to the fact that its home is the waterhole at Thapauerlu.

A very curious feature in regard to all their ceremonies is that, whilst the actual performers must belong to the moiety of the tribe with which that ceremony is associated, all the decorations and everything required for it are provided by the men of the other moiety. Thus, for example, the great Wollunqua belongs to the Uluuru, and

therefore the men who performed were always decorated by Kingilli men, and the latter made everything that was used and even drew from their own bodies the blood that did duty for gum. Not only was this so, but whilst the preparations were in progress, only Kingilli men were allowed to come anywhere near the ceremonial ground, with of course the exception of the actual performers, until all was ready for the performance.

There are eleven places especially associated with the wanderings of the Wollunqua. When he left Thapauerlu, he first travelled underground towards the east and emerged, or rather his head end did, at a waterhole called Pitingari, his tail end being still in his original home. In the ceremony connected with Pitingari, the men were decorated with a broad curved band of red down running across both the back and front, the whole of the upper half of the body except the band being covered with a mass of white down. Each man also wore a tall conical helmet decorated with a curved band of red down. All these bands represent the Wollunqua. When the decorations were complete, each of the two men went and hid himself behind a bush some little distance from the ceremonial ground, on to which the Uluuru men were then allowed to come and mix with the Kingilli men. To an accompaniment of singing and beating of boomerangs, the performers then emerged on to the open ground and ran in, stopping every now and then to shake themselves in imitation of the snake, and finally sat down close together on a few green gum-tree boughs, with their heads bent down. Their head-dresses were immediately knocked off by a Kingilli man and the performance was over, except that some of the men came up and stroked the curved band



Fig. 274. CEREMONY OF AN ANT TOTEM, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

The performer is supposed to represent one of two women ancestors of the totem, searching for and gathering ants, on which she fed.



Fig. 275. CLOSE OF A CEREMONY CONNECTED WITH A LIZARD TOTEM: KNOCKING OFF THE HELMET. WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

of red down, which was supposed to have a soothing effect on the snake itself.

At the time of our visit there was a celebrated old Worgaia man in the Warramunga camp (Figs. 277, 278). He was not only a medicine man of such repute that he was known in this capacity even to the Warramunga, but he was also a great maker of medicine men. It is quite possible that he owed his reputation in part to the fact that his magic belonged to a distant country, and being therefore more or less unknown was correspondingly potent. Be this as it may, he was undoubtedly a man of considerable influence, so much so that he took really the leading part in preparing the Wollunqua ceremonies. On the second day he made a curious curved bundle somewhat like an enormous rounded boomerang. It was composed of grass stalks bound round and round with human hair string and then ornamented with white down. One of the performers carried it on his head as shown in the illustration (Fig. 279), and as he ran in to the ceremonial ground from his hiding place in the scrub, he kept stooping to peer about from side to side, quivering his body as he did so, with the result that he threw off small showers of white down. The natives have a remarkable power of making their bodies shake and quiver whilst they are performing their ceremonies (Fig. 280).

Three or four days later a much more interesting ceremony was performed. Under the guidance of the old Worgaia man, the Kingilli men spent the whole day, from ten in the morning till between five and six in the afternoon, building a most remarkable mound of sandy earth. First of all they made two brakes of boughs, enclosing a space about thirty feet long and fifteen in greatest breadth. The brakes were curved so that there was a comparatively

narrow entrance at each end. The object of this was to hide the mound from the sight of all except those who were actually engaged in building it. When this was ready a trench, fifteen feet in length and two in width, was dug and then filled again with sand mixed with water. Handful after handful was carefully patted down until, finally, a keel-shaped mound was built, about two feet at its greatest height and tapering off at either end, its length corresponding to that of the original trench. The surface was as smooth as it could be made by dint of constant patting. The old Worgaia man then outlined on each side a long waving band about four inches wide, the two bands meeting at each end. At the northern end a small rounded swelling was subsequently added indicating the head, and at the southern a median prolongation represented the tail. Then the Kingilli men sat down by its side, and hour after hour they patiently struck endless dots of red and white down on to it until the whole surface was completely covered—the wavy band with red and the rest with white down (Fig. 281). Every now and then they sang chants referring to the great Wollunqua, its wanderings and its goings down into the ground. At times they broke out into refrains such as "Yanga le deba; le deba; yanga le deba"; or "Waiu irri; we gar dudu: waiu wanga wanga; waiu irri; irri wanga du du du; wanga du du du du." These latter have been handed down with the ceremony, and their meaning is unknown. This went on hour after hour with wearisome repetition, the singing as usual always beginning very loudly on a high note and gradually dying away, falling lower and lower as it did so.

The whole mound was supposed to represent a particularly large sand-hill, by the side of which the snake stood up and looked around and with which he



Fig. 276. CLOSE OF A CEREMONY CONNECTED WITH A LIZARD TOTEM, WARAMUNGA TRIBE.

The performer is tumbling down on to the ground. The knocked-off helmet lies on the ground to the left of the two figures.
(p. 398).

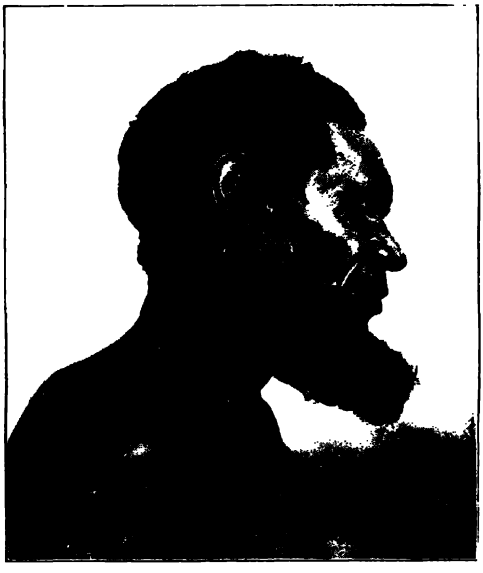


Fig. 277. MAN OF THE WORGAIA TRIBE, SHOWING THE HAIRS PULLED OUT ON THE LIPS, SIDE FACE.



Fig. 278. MAN OF THE WORGAIA TRIBE, FULL FACE.
The design indicates that he is a medicine-man.



Fig. 279. CEREMONY CONNECTED WITH WOLLUNQUA TOTEM. WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
The curved bundle represents the Wollunqua snake.

was in some way especially associated. The broad wavy band was emblematic of the snake itself.

It was between five and six in the afternoon when word was sent to the older men amongst the Uluuru that all was ready. The latter—led by an old man, the head of the Wollunqua totem group—came on to the ceremonial ground in single file escorted by an old Kingilli man. The Kingilli stood up at one end, while the Uluuru walked twice round the mound gazing at it with intense interest and apparent astonishment (Fig. 283). Only one or two of the older men had seen one like it before, and the others only knew of it by hearsay. This over, one of the Uluuru took a gum bough and stroked the ground all round the base of the mound (Fig. 282); the old Worgaia man, who knew most about it, was hard at work gesticulating wildly and explaining its meaning, telling them finally that the Wollunqua and the mound that they, the Kingilli, had made belonged to them.

Everybody then sat down, quietly examining the mound and talking in low tones about the snake, after which the Uluuru arose and went silently back to their camp, leaving the Kingilli once more in charge. Nothing more was done until dark, and then three old Kingilli men lighted fires on the ceremonial ground and began to sing aloud, so that the Uluuru men in their camp could hear them. First of all they sang as follows:—

Da dun burri wurri a
Da dun burri wurri a
Da iwun ma
Da dun burri wurri a
Da iwun ma,

alternating this with

Yam anna yanti andi,

repeated time after time. They did not know the

meaning of these words. When not singing they shouted out at the top of their voices, telling the Uluuru that they were "singing their Wingara." It was evident that something special and out of the ordinary was going to happen, so we took our rugs down to the ceremonial ground and prepared for an all-night sitting. About ten o'clock the Uluuru and the remaining Kingilli men again came up, more fires were lighted, and the singing was interminable. Towards midnight three recently initiated youths were brought up, their heads covered in rugs, which were removed as they stood by the side of the mound and had its meaning explained to them. After this, until three o'clock in the morning, singing went on without a moment's pause, and we waited patiently, wondering what was going to happen. Suddenly the excitement increased. Fires were lighted all round the ground, making the white trunks of the gum trees and the near scrub stand out brilliantly against the darkness beyond. The Uluuru men, kneeling down, ranged themselves in single file beside the mound, and, with their hands on their thighs, surged round and round it, every man, in unison, bending down first to one side and then to the other. The Kingilli men stood round in a state of great excitement, the oldest man amongst them swaying his body about, while with exaggerated high knee-action he walked backwards at the head of the kneeling procession. As the Kingilli men clanged their boomerangs together, the Uluuru with rhythmic movement, swayed about wildly from side to side, shouting, or rather yelling, "Yrrsh! Yrrsh! Yrrsh!" at each movement, until they had passed twice completely round the mound. As the fires died down they arose from their knees, and every one once more sat down round the mound. Every now and again the singing would flag and we thought there would be



Fig. 280. CLOSE OF A CEREMONY CONNECTED WITH THE WOLLUNQUA TOTEM, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

The youth in the background with his hair tied up has been recently initiated, and is witnessing the series of sacred ceremonies for the first time

(p. 401).



Fig. 281. PREPARING THE WOLLUNQUA MOUND. WARRAMUNGA TRIBE (p. 402).

peace for a little time, but suddenly some old veteran would rise to the occasion and with a hoarse squeaky note set them off again.

This went on till four o'clock, and as soon as ever the first streak of dawn appeared, a signal was given and every man rose to his feet. Then the old Kingilli man gave the word, and amidst frantic yells they hacked the mound to pieces, until all that remained was a long rough heap of sandy soil. The fires died down, and for a short time there was silence. This did not last long, however. Everybody was very excited, and just at sunrise we went across to another ceremonial ground about half a mile away, and brought an extraordinary night's performance to a close with the final initiation ceremony of three youths.

The mound and ceremony connected with it are called "Miniimburu," which means "laying the snake to rest," and is associated in the native mind partly with the idea of propitiating him, and partly with that of forcing him to do what they want. They say that when he sees the mound with its representation drawn on it he is gratified, and wriggles about with pleasure underneath. The savage attack on the mound is associated with the idea of driving him down. It is necessary to do things to please him, or else he might grow sulky and come out and hurt them ; but at the same time they sometimes use force to make him do what they want. On the evening of the day on which the Miniimburu was performed, the old Kingilli men who had made the mound said that they had heard the old Wollunqua talking, and that he was pleased with what had been done and was sending rain, the explanation of which doubtless was that they, like ourselves, had heard thunder in the distance. Unfortunately no rain fell, but a few days later the distant

rumble of thunder was again heard at night, and this the old men now said was the Wollunqua growling because the remains of the mound had been left uncovered. They also informed the young men that a very heavy bank of clouds that lay along the western horizon had been placed there as a warning by the Wollunqua, and at once cut down boughs and hid the ruins of the mound from view, after which he ceased from growling and there was no further trouble.

For four days after this we had no Wollunqua ceremonies, though there were plenty of others connected with ant, lizard, fire, and wild-cat totems. When they did begin again they were in one respect quite different from the previous ceremonies. On each of eight successive days a special drawing was made upon the ground, each of which was supposed in some way to be associated with some special spot at which the animal stood up, performed ceremonies, and left spirit children behind him in the Wingara (Figs. 284-290). The drawings were all made on the same spot on the ceremonial ground, and were each either rubbed out the morning after the ceremony in connection with them had been performed (never on the same day), or were restored and added to. The sandy soil was first smoothed down with the palm of the hand, then sprinkled with water and again smoothed, so as to afford a more or less compact surface. It was then covered with a coat of red or yellow ochre, and when this was dry the design, which always consisted of concentric circles and curved lines, was drawn upon it in red ochre or a mixture of grease and charcoal, and the whole of the remainder of the space was covered with white dots. The drawing of the main design, that is of the circles and lines, was always done by an old man, usually by the Worgaia medicine man, who, after issuing instruc-



Fig. 282. STROKING THE BASE OF THE WOLLUNQUA MOUND TO APPEASE THE SNAKE. WARRAMUNGA TRIBE (p. 403).



Fig. 283. THE KINGILLI MEN SHOWING THE WOLLUNQUA MOUND TO THE ULUURU, WHO ARE WALKING ROUND IT, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE (p. 403).



Fig. 284 PREPARATION FOR A GROUND-DRAWING IN CONNECTION WITH A CEREMONY OF THE WOLLUNQUA TOTEM, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

tions, would sometimes remain and assist in the further work, but more often left this to the younger men. The material used for the white dots is a kind of kaolin, of which there is a deposit near Tennant Creek. After a preliminary grinding, small lumps of this are taken into the mouth, and after being ground down by the teeth—a somewhat gritty proceeding—the semi-fluid is spat out into a receptacle and mixed with water. The dots are made on the ground by means of a very primitive paint-brush that consists of a little wooden twig, one end of which has been frayed out by the teeth. The brush is first dabbed into the emulsion and then on to the smooth ground-surface, on which, of course, it makes a round white dot. The work of drawing these designs, every part of them being done by Kingilli men, usually occupied the best part of the day. Their nature can be seen from the illustrations, and they certainly were very effective from a crude artistic point of view. Seeing that the circles were drawn merely with the old man's fingers without any such thing as a compass or mechanical assistance of any kind, their comparative accuracy was astonishing.

The last ceremony was on a somewhat extensive scale, so far as the size of the ground drawing and the number of performers was concerned. It was associated with a spot called Ununtumurra, where the Wollunqua ceased from his wanderings. All the time, it must be remembered, he had been getting further and further away from Thapauerlu—or, to speak more accurately, his head had, for the end of his tail still remained there, as he was of immense size. The ground design was very elaborate. In the centre of it were three concentric circles of black, which were supposed to represent the place Ununtumurra. Attached to one side of the outermost was a semicircle

forming the termination of a broad, sinuous band of black, fully eighteen feet in length (Fig. 293). Close by and attached also to the outer circle were two curved bands. All along the main band there was outlined, also in black, a series of tracks, which very cleverly imitated those made by a man walking with naked feet. Two other impressions of feet were also drawn by the side of the small semicircular band. The footmarks were interesting, because all the rest of the drawing was purely conventional. Four other series of concentric circles were drawn, and the bands and circles were enclosed in the usual groundwork of white dots.

The interpretation of the whole drawing is as follows. Tradition says that, in the Alcheringa, a man named Mumumanungara came out of the snake's body and remained with the Wollunqua as his mate. When the old snake set out on his travels, the man was very much distressed for fear lest he should leave Thapauerlu for ever. After the snake had been gone some time, he set out to track him up and came across him, or rather his head end, close to Ununtumurra, and at first walked quietly along by the side of his track. Finally, standing close by the snake, and lifting up his two arms, as indicated by the two curved bands and also by the double footmarks, he struck the snake as hard as he could with a stick, hoping thus to drive him back to Thapauerlu. He was successful, for the old Wollunqua curled his body round that of his mate Mumumanungara, lifted himself on high, and, with a great dive, plunged into the earth, and thus the two went back to Thapauerlu.

We had been very much interested in the Wollunqua ceremonies, and were anxious to see for ourselves the snake's home at Thapauerlu and the sacred spots around it, so we proposed to the old men of the totem group that



Fig. 235. GROUP OF MEN STANDING AROUND A GROUND-DRAWING IN CONNECTION WITH A CEREMONY OF THE WOLLUNQUA TOTEM.



Fig. 286. GROUND-DRAWING IN CONNECTION WITH A CEREMONY OF THE WOLLUNQUA TOTEM, AND FIVE PERFORMERS TAKING PART IN THE CEREMONY, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

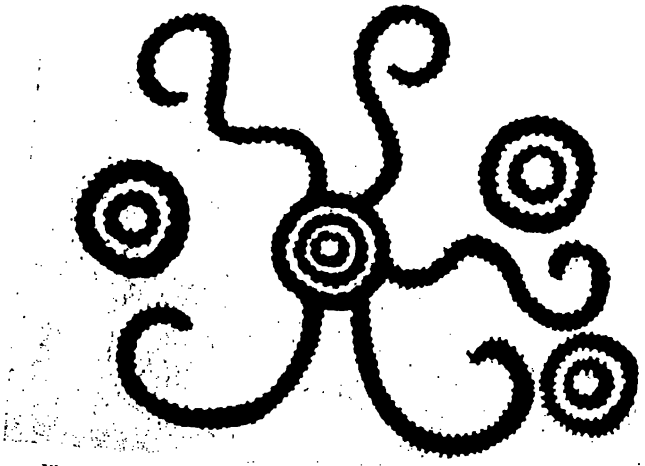


Fig. 287. GROUND-DRAWING ASSOCIATED WITH THE WOLLUNQUA TOTEMIC CEREMONY OF A PLACE CALLED TIKOMERI.

they should take us there. They readily fell in with our suggestion, and, a few days after the completion of the ceremonies, we started off from Tennant Creek in company with a small party of about a dozen of the older men, including the two chief men of the totem group.

For the first two days our way lay across very uninteresting plain country covered with poor scrub, with here and there a low range of hills. Every prominent feature of any kind was associated with some tradition of their past. A range five miles away from Tennant Creek had arisen to mark the path traversed by the great ancestor of the Pittongu (bat) totem. Several miles further on, a solitary, upstanding column of rock represented an opossum man who rested here during his travels, looked about the country, and left spirit children behind him when he journeyed on. A low range of remarkable, white quartzite hills indicated a large number of white-ant eggs, thrown down here by some women called Munga-Munga who belonged to the yam totem. They were sent away to the east from a place close to Tennant Creek by the ancestor of the black-snake totem, carrying their yams with them. These were Churinga, and they deposited them (Fig. 291) along with the spirits associated with them, at various places as they travelled on towards and across the country of the Worgaia tribe ; indeed one of the old Worgaia men with us was the reincarnation of one of these yam spirits.

As we rode slowly along, the natives keeping pace with us on foot, the old men were continually talking about the natural features associated in their traditions with various totemic ancestors, and pointing out to us every feature that interested them.

On the second night we camped by a waterhole where an old crow ancestor once lived and where there are now

plenty of crow spirit children. On the third day we travelled along by the side of a dry creek and passed the spot where two hawk ancestors first made fire by rubbing sticks together, two fine gum trees on the banks now representing the place where they did this. A few miles further on we came to a waterhole, by the side of which a moon man met a bandicoot woman. They were so long talking together that the fire, made by the hawks, crept upon them before they could get out of the way and burnt the woman, who was, however, restored to life by the moon man, with whom she then went up into the sky.

We were gradually approaching the Murchison Range, and late in the afternoon of the third day skirted its base, and, following up a valley leading into the hills, camped, just after sunset, by the side of a picturesque waterhole called Wiarminni. We were now, so to speak, in the very midst of Mungai—that is, spots once inhabited by the old ancestors, and now full of spirit children. These old ancestors showed a commendable fondness for walking about in a few picturesque spots that their country contained, and seem to have selected these rocky ranges as their central home. All around us the waterholes, gorges and rocky crags were peopled with spirit individuals, left behind by one or other of the totemic ancestors—Wollunqua, Pittongu (bat), Wongana (crow), wild dog, emu, bandicoot, fish and kangaroo—whose lines of travel in the mystic past times, called the Wingara, formed a regular network over the whole country-side. At night as we lay on the ground by the side of our camp fire, with the natives—all of them elders of the tribe—talking about what had happened in the far past times, we realised more fully perhaps than we had ever done before what these old traditions meant to them, and could almost

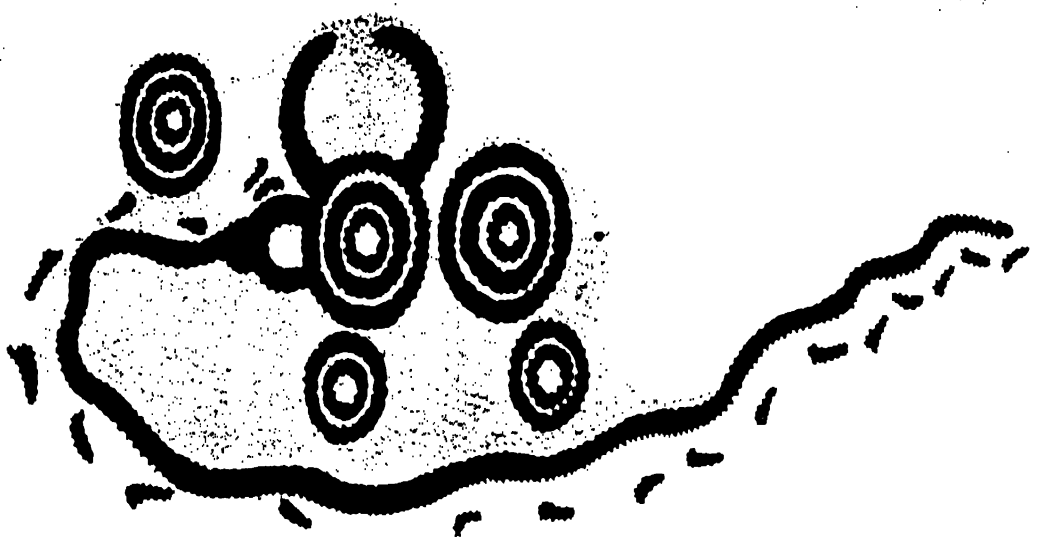


Fig. 288. GROUND-DRAWING ASSOCIATED WITH THE WOLLUNQUA TOTEMIC CEREMONY OF A PLACE CALLED UNUNTUMURRA (p. 406).

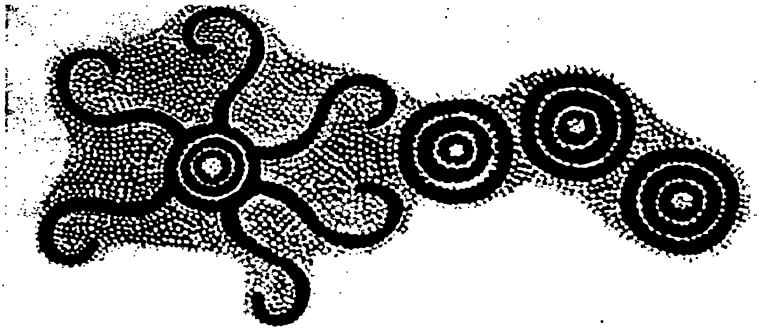


Fig. 289. GROUND-DRAWING ASSOCIATED WITH THE WOLLUNQUA TOTEMIC CEREMONY OF A PLACE CALLED PARAPAKINI
(p. 406).



Fig. 290. GROUND-DRAWING ASSOCIATED WITH THE WOLLUNQUA TOTEMIC CEREMONY OF A PLACE CALLED PARAPAKINI
(p. 406).



Fig. 291. STONE CHURINGA REPRESENTING ONE OF THE YAMS CARRIED BY THE MUNGA-MUNGA WOMEN IN THE WINGARA TIMES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE
(p. 409).

believe, with them, that the ancestral spirits were actually wandering around us, as we fell asleep, surrounded by the very trees, rocks and waterholes in which they lived. In the morning we set out under the guidance of the natives, and for some miles followed on foot the course of a broad valley, which after a time narrowed down to a rocky gorge, running right into the heart of the ranges.

The plan (Fig. 292) will serve to indicate the chief

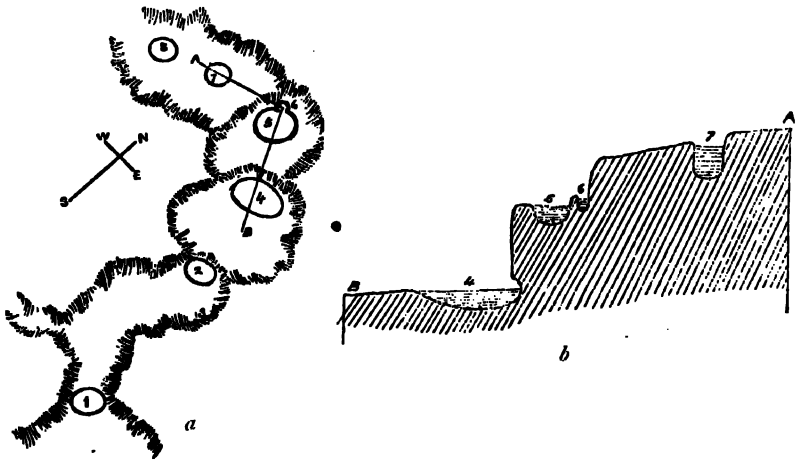


FIG. 292.—(*a*) GROUND-PLAN OF THE VALLEY IN WHICH THAPAUERLU IS SITUATED.
(*b*) SECTION ALONG THE LINE A B.
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 indicate waterholes in the rocky bed of the stream which flows down the valley.

features in the gorge, the entrance to which is blocked, save for a very narrow passage round the rocks on one side of the waterhole, called Tjintjinga (1), where there is a Wollunqua mungai. All the trees bordering the creek contain spirit children. A little distance further up, the passage is completely blocked by a rock hole (2), close to which is a lofty cave called Maralintha-taparinia (3). This was made by two old men in the Wingara times, and now two weather-beaten shrubs, on the opposite rocks,

indicate where they stood up and looked at the waterhole and cave.

Making a detour to the west, we scrambled up the steep sides of the gorge and then came down to Thapauerlu, and found ourselves by the side of a picturesque pool with a sandy margin on the south and a little precipice of red quartzite rocks curving round its northern edge, over which, in rainy seasons, the water falls from a height of twenty or thirty feet into the pool below (Fig. 294). The rocks are hollowed out, so that they overhang the water and form a long shallow cave, from the roof of which clusters of what are evidently roots of trees, which have forced their way down through fissures in the quartzite rocks, hang pendent. They are supposed by the natives to represent the whiskers of the Wollunqua.

While we were walking up the gorge the natives had been talking and laughing freely, but, as we approached Thapauerlu itself, they became very quiet and solemn; and, as we stood silently on the edge of the pool, the two old chief men of the group went to the edge of the water, and with bowed heads addressed the Wollunqua in whispers, asking him to remain quiet and do them no harm, for they were mates of his and had brought up two great white men to see where he lived and to tell them all about him. We could plainly see that it was all very real to them, and that they implicitly believed that the Wollunqua was indeed alive beneath the water, watching them, though they could not see him.

Thapauerlu is evidently a permanent waterhole, though in seasons of extreme drought it is doubtless much smaller in size than when we saw it. Under such conditions the margins of the water will retreat backwards towards the rocks, immediately under which it is not only very deep but is completely sheltered from the



Fig. 293. FINAL CEREMONY IN CONNECTION WITH THE WOLLUNQUA TOTEM, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
The helmets are in the act of being pulled off the heads of the performers, who are seated around the ground-drawing (p. 108).

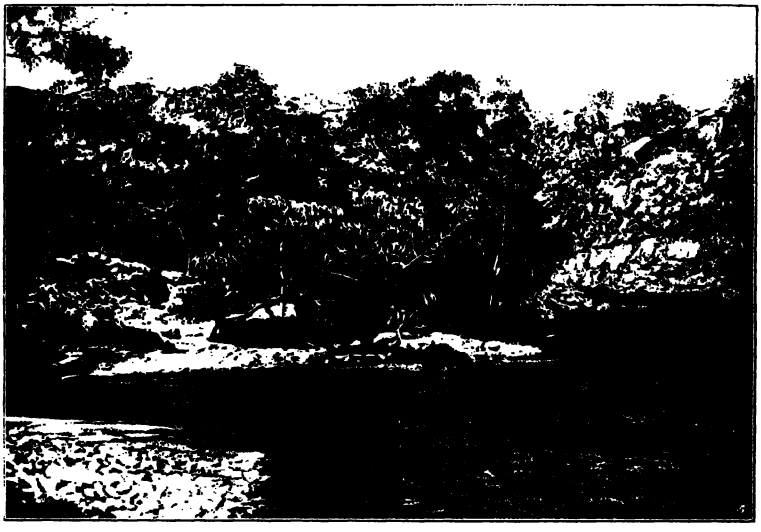


Fig. 294. THAPAUERLU, A WATERHOLE IN THE MURCHISON RANGE WHERE THE WOLLUNQUA SNAKE IS SUPPOSED BY THE WARRAMUNGA TRIBE TO LIVE.



Fig. 295. TWO YOUNGER MEN BEING RUBBED BY AN OLDER ONE WITH STONES WHICH ARE SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT PARTS OF THE BODY OF A EURO (KANGAROO), WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

The rubbing is supposed to enable them to catch euros easily.

sun's rays. After the natives had pointed out the different features to us we made another detour, climbing up over the hillsides and then again descending into the bed of the gorge higher up the valley. Immediately above Thapauerlu, though quite invisible from the latter, is a deep rocky basin, called Miradji (5), the overflow of which runs down into the former. This upper basin was made, in the Wingara times, during a fight between a wild dog and a kangaroo. As they fought fiercely, the latter lashed its tail round and round, thus hollowing out the rock and making the present waterhole, but in the end the dog was victorious, and killed and ate the kangaroo. Attached as it were to one side of Miradji is a kind of very large pot-hole (6) about five feet in diameter and six in depth, which is specially associated with the same kangaroo. It contains a large number of rounded boulders, varying in size from an inch to a foot in diameter. They are supposed to represent different parts of the organs of the animal—kidney, heart, tail, intestines, etc. The two younger of the men who came with us to the spot immediately went into the rock-hole, which contained about three feet of water, and after splashing this all over their bodies, and rubbing each other with a few of the stones lying at the bottom, they were rubbed again by an older man (Fig. 295). This little ceremony has the object of enabling the men, who are thus rubbed with stones representing parts of the kangaroo, to go out into the bush and catch kangaroos more easily than they would otherwise be able to do.

Above Miradji there lie two more rock-holes, both intimately associated with the Wollunqua, who left spirit children here; indeed, the oldest of the natives who accompanied us was the reincarnation of one of these individuals, and his personal and secret name, Marunqua-

gnuna, was derived from Marunqua, the native name of the upper and smaller of the two holes.[1] The large one is like a great pot-hole about ten feet in diameter. Its name is Tadjinara, and it is of special interest, as it was actually here that the Wollunqua originally arose. When he started out on his travels he still kept the end of his tail in the pool and only withdrew it when, at Ununtumurra, he made his great dive into the earth and returned underground to take up his final abode in Thapauerlu.

[1] "Gnuna" is a suffix meaning "of" or "belonging to," and is the equivalent of "rinia" in the Arunta tribe.

CHAPTER XVIII

FIRE CEREMONY OF THE WARRAMUNGA TRIBE

ONE of the most grotesque and at the same time picturesque ceremonies that we witnessed was an extraordinary performance, or rather a series of ceremonies, carried out by the Wurramunga tribe, the climax of which consisted in a kind of ordeal by fire. It was quite different from the one associated with the Engwura in the Arunta tribe, which forms part of the initiation ceremonies through which every man must pass; indeed, in certain respects, it seemed to take very much the form of a primitive kind of saturnalia.

In the Warramunga tribe the two moieties, called respectively Uluuru and Kingilli, each of which comprises approximately half of the tribe, are very clearly defined, and the fact of the existence of these two moieties is very distinctly seen during the performance of any important ceremony. As we have described, in the case of the sacred ceremonies the Kingilli men take charge of the performance of the Uluuru ceremonies, and, on the other hand, the Uluuru take charge of those of the Kingilli men.

One evening, just after the conclusion of the bone-breaking ceremony in connection with the burial rites described later, we heard sounds of laughing, singing, and shouting going on at a spot not far away

from the main camp by the side of the creek. It was quite dark, but, as soon as we reached the camp, where numerous fires were burning brightly, we saw at once that something out of the common was being enacted. Men of all classes were represented in the group gathered round the fires. Every now and again two or three of them suddenly jumped up and, flourishing spears, shields and boomerangs, rushed madly around, yelling at the top of their voices and executing the most grotesque movements, much to the amusement of the onlookers. Then some one, perhaps even a young and recently-initiated youth, would make a sneering, insulting remark to an old man or steal away with a weapon belonging to another man. A young man snatched food away from an old man—a most unheard-of thing in ordinary circumstances—and ran off with it. Whatever was done was regarded by every one as a source of merriment, and time after time, with a sudden yell, a man would spring from the ground, followed immediately by others, and then they would dance, first to one side and then to the other, evidently intent upon making themselves look as grotesque as possible. There were, of course, only men at the central camp, but the women and children were camped about two hundred yards away and they took their share in the ceremony. The men continually shouted out to the women, who, in reply, came out from their mia-mias, or bush shelters, dancing and singing in the light of fires that were burning brightly in and about the camps. This went on till midnight, and then the women and children retired and the men lay down by the side of their fires on the bank of the creek.

Very early next morning, before sunrise, the men were up and immediately began to paint themselves with lines of yellow ochre. A little later the women grouped



Fig. 296. FIRE CEREMONY.
The men approaching the women.



Fig. 297. FIRE CEREMONY, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

The men dancing in single file towards the women, one of whom being in mourning is daubed over with white pipe-clay.

themselves together, dancing in the manner characteristic of them when they are taking part in a ceremony. They were huddled closely together, swaying their bodies backwards and forwards with a bending movement at the hips and knees, and their hands moving as if to invite the men to approach. The men formed into single file, all except two of them, who went to one side beating the ground with shields, while the others advanced in a single line, every man with his hands clasped behind his neck. One after another they knelt down on their knees and, swaying from side to side, waddled on towards the women. The front men rose to their feet before those in the rear of the fantastic procession were down on their knees, producing a wave-like effect along the line of bodies. The sun rose while the procession was moving along towards the women, throwing long weird shadows across the bare sandy ground. All the men, when close to the women, arose and came on, bending their bodies and swaying them from side to side with exaggerated high knee-action. Suddenly wheeling round, they turned, passed by in front of the women and ran back to their camp. An hour later the camps were deserted save for a few old men and women. Every one else had gone out, miles away, into the scrub—the men in one direction and the women in another.

The two illustrations will give a faint, but only a very faint, idea of this curious ceremony. The only possible chance of photographing such a scene is by means of snapshots, and these are not easy to take either late in the evening or at early dawn, at one of which times many of the ceremonies are performed. Of these two photographs (Figs. 296, 297) one was taken immediately before sunrise, when there was neither light nor shadow, and the other, as the long shadows indicate, immediately after.

On their return, a week later, the singing and banter went on for hours at a stretch every evening. During the daytime the Kingilli men were busy making huge torches called Wanmanmirri. Twelve gum-trees saplings were cut down, each of them providing a straight pole from twelve to fifteen feet in length. They were brought into a camp on the other side of the creek, so that the Uluuru men could not see what was being done. Large numbers of leafy gum twigs were then gathered and tied tightly on to the poles, until each of them was enclosed in a mass of foliage nearly two feet in diameter. They were propped upright in the scrub, and in the dry air very soon formed masses of highly inflammable material.

The last two days of the ceremony were full of picturesque and, at times, exciting incidents. On the first, a special pole called Wintari, twenty feet in length, was prepared by the old men in the bed of the creek, and, after having been red-ochred all over, a bunch of green gum-tree twigs was tied to the top. The women were driven far away from their camp, and while they were out in the scrub, the pole was fixed upright in the ground half-way between the women's and the men's camp. The men spent all the afternoon decorating themselves in the bed of the creek, some having cross bands of black edged with white and others yellow vertical bands on their back and chest. The lubras, hidden from view in another part of the creek, were ornamenting themselves with yellow bands. When all was ready, the women were summoned and approached the pole, dancing in the usual manner. First of all they clustered round it, and two or three of them tried to climb it. While they were doing this the men came up from the creek in single file, the women, as soon as they saw them, withdrawing a little way from the pole, still dancing and singing (Fig. 298). The



Fig. 298. FIRE CEREMONY.
Women dancing in front of the Wintari pole.



Fig. 299. FIRE CEREMONY.
Men dancing and jeering at others who are shut up in the bough wurley.

men came on, alternately standing up and waddling along on their knees, while one or two of the older men stood to one side of the procession, keeping time by beating shields on the ground. Slowly they all passed round the pole and returned to their camp, the women running away as soon as the last man, waddling on his knees, had reached the pole. The sun was just setting when this performance came to an end, and when night came on, the singing and grotesque dancing were wilder than ever.

Very early next morning a bough wurley was built near the creek, and into this the Uluuru men went, accompanied by a few of the Kingilli, and for hours, packed closely together, they kept up a continuous singing to the accompaniment of the beating of boomerangs. We went, or rather looked, inside every now and then to see what was going on; but the air within the wurley, on which the sun was shining hotly, was simply stifling, and the peculiar smell of aborigines, all of them well-greased, hot and excited, was so remarkably strong that we were thankful to be able to remain outside in the open air, and at the same time see all that was going on. The natives, however, did not seem to mind the stifling heat, and the singing, which referred to the progress of the fire ceremony across the country from the far north-east, went on hour after hour without stopping. After some time, the few Kingilli men within the wurley began to decorate five of the Uluuru men who were to take a special part in the performance. Whilst this was in progress the other Kingilli men every now and again came and danced wildly in front of the entrance, jeering and poking fun at the Uluuru men within the wurley (Fig. 299). During the course of the morning the torches were brought up from the creek, and then twelve Kingilli men took hold of them and danced about in front of the opening, first facing it

and then turning their backs to it, yelling wildly as they did so (Figs. 300, 301). Each of the torches was at least twelve feet long and of considerable weight, and it was astonishing how the men could hold them upright and at the same time dance and prance about. The women, meanwhile, had run up a rough bough shelter some distance from the camp. At four o'clock all except the decorated men left the wurley and went to the creek, where they provided themselves with heavy slabs of gum-tree bark, armed with which they made a wide circle round the camp, driving the women along the flat until they fled for protection into their shelter, against which the men viciously hurled their bark slabs. The younger women were terrified, but only one was slightly damaged, and, when all the bark had been thrown, the men ran back to their camp, where they remained singing until about eight o'clock, when the fire ceremony began in real earnest.

The torches were brought up and placed on one side of the wurley, out of which the decorated men now came, and at first sat in the shade. Fires were lighted, and, after the capering and yelling had gone on for some time, the decorated men came up in pairs, and, taking bunches of lighted twigs, struck them together, scattering burning embers over themselves and all the men who crowded round them. Meanwhile three recently initiated youths had been brought up and placed, lying on the ground, with their heads covered, so that they could see nothing, until they were suddenly roused by the old men and told to watch the performers, who paid them special attention in the way of burning embers. When this was over, a procession was formed, headed by the decorated men, who waddled along on their knees, swaying from side to side and followed by all the men, who were shouting at the



Fig. 300. FIRE CEREMONY, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

Men with torches dancing in front of the wurley, in which the other men are seated singing and preparing for a sacred ceremony.



Fig. 301. FIRE CEREMONY.
Men with torches dancing with their backs turned to the wurley.

top of their voices "Oh! Oh! Oh! Prr! Prr!" until, with a final prolonged "Prr! Prr!" they all fell down in a dense heap, the performers in the centre.

By this time the women and children had assembled at the Wintari pole, about a hundred yards away, where they could see at least a fair amount of what was taking place, though of course not very distinctly. For an hour nothing special happened. Then the Kingilli men took bunches of gum-tree twigs in the form of double bundles, which they tied, some on to their thighs, others into their waist girdles in the small of the back. Each man seized a boomerang, club or shield, and, falling into single file, began a grotesque dance, every man moving his body as though it worked on a swivel in his hip region. Suddenly the line turned and closely encircled the Uluuru men. There was just light enough to see them by, but you could have heard them a mile away. At a given signal they all tore off the twigs and heaped them on the fires, which for a time gave out a brilliant light, while the men danced and yelled like maniacs.

When it was comparatively dark again, a circle of twelve holes was made in the ground around the seated Uluuru men, and the great torches (Wanmanmirri) were fixed upright. The excitement grew more and more intense as the Kingilli danced and yelled at the Uluuru, who sat, closely huddled together, within the circle of leaf-covered poles. The torches were removed, and preparations were made for the real, serious business. The special men who were to carry them, some of them Kingilli and others Uluuru, retired to various spots, each of them accompanied by a few friends. A large supply of mud and pipe-clay had been brought on to the ceremonial ground, and each of the twelve men was now daubed all over, literally from the crown of his head to the sole of his

feet, first with red mud and then with white pipe-clay, until they looked like hideously grotesque, half-modelled human beings, dripping with white mud (Fig. 302). When all was ready the torches were handed to them. Fires were made, and the ends of the torches thrust into them until they were well alight. The performance opened by one of the men charging full-tilt, holding his lighted torch as if it were a bayonet, and driving the blazing end into a group of natives, in the centre of which stood a man with whom, some time ago, he had had a serious quarrel. Warded off with clubs and spear-throwers, the torch glanced upwards. This was the signal for a general mêlée. Every torch was blazing brilliantly, the men were leaping and prancing about, yelling madly; the dozen blazing torches time after time came crashing down on the heads and bodies of all and any who happened to be near them, scattering lighted embers all around. The air was full of falling sparks, and the weird, whitened bodies of the combatants were alight with burning twigs and leaves. The smoke, the blazing torches, the showers of sparks falling in all directions, and the mass of howling, dancing men, some of them with their bodies grotesquely bedaubed, formed a scene that was little short of fiendish.

To one side stood the lubras, wailing and moaning and burning themselves with lighted twigs, under the impression, so they said, that by doing this they would prevent the men from seriously hurting themselves. At length the torches were dashed upon the ground and their fires extinguished. The men who had been carrying them retired to one side with their friends, and scraped the mud and embers off their bodies. It was now eleven o'clock, and for a time there was comparative quiet; so we curled ourselves up on the ground, a little distance from the natives, in our rugs, which we had taken care to

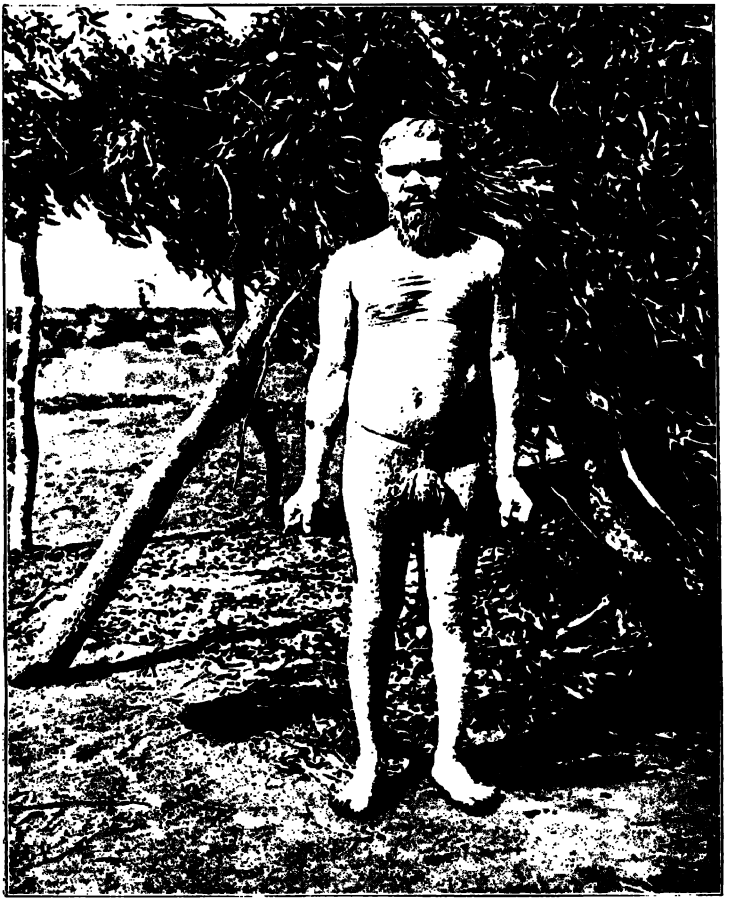


Fig. 302. FIRE CEREMONY, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
Man daubed over with mud and pipe-clay.

bring with us, and, with the beating of boomerangs for a lullaby, had a short sleep until just before midnight, when the noise began again. The torches were relighted, but this time no attempt was made to strike any one with them. They were merely lifted up, waved about in the air and dashed down upon the ground, time after time, until everything was burnt. When this was over the men gathered round the fires singing. As soon as even the faintest light was seen in the eastern sky, the decorated men crept quietly towards the pole, around which the women were gathered, most of them having lain down there on the ground for the whole night. The women pretended not to know that they were there, though the elder ones, who had been through the ceremony before, of course knew what was taking place, and probably all of them took care to have a good look at the performers, as it was one of the very rare occasions on which they had the chance of seeing any of the men decorated for a sacred ceremony. Just before sunrise the men ceased singing, rose from beside their fires, and, taking pieces of lighted bark, threw them in the direction of the women and children. Then they rushed across to where the decorated men were hiding and led them to the pole, round which the women were now standing. The younger ones at once ran away to their camp, only about ten of the older ones remaining, the decorated men, huddled close together, crouching low down upon the ground, while the women, each of them carrying a little wooden trough with small stones in it, danced round and round, jingling the stones all the time. In a few minutes—just before the sun rose—they stopped; the women ran away to their camp, the men came back to theirs, and this extraordinary fire ceremony was over.

CHAPTER XIX

DEATH, MOURNING AND BURIAL CEREMONIES OF THE WARRAMUNGA TRIBE

WHILST staying amongst the Warramunga tribe we were fortunate enough to see what, so far as we could tell, was the complete series of ceremonies from the moment of death until the final burial of the bones of a dead native in the earth.

The different ceremonies were of course concerned with more than one individual, because the entire series in the case of one person is spread over a period of two years or even longer.

A middle-aged man who, when first we arrived, took an active part in the ceremonies, fell ill. He was a medicine man, but only a comparatively young one—perhaps thirty or thirty-five years of age—and there were certain foods, such as emu flesh and eggs, which he was not only forbidden to eat but which he was supposed, according to strict etiquette, to bring in to the older medicine men for them to eat. Not only had he omitted to do this, but on more than one occasion he had actually been known to eat them himself—a very grave offence in the eyes of the older men, who had warned him that if he persisted in doing so something serious would happen to him. Accordingly, when his illness came, it was clearly a case of "We told you so." It was at once attributed to

the fact that he had deliberately done what he knew perfectly well was contrary to custom, and no one was in the least surprised. We provided him with medicine at different times, castor oil and Epsom salts, and also with bovril, but it was no use, as the medicine men in attendance drank them all with evident relish, and went on with their own treatment. There were five qualified medicine men in camp, one of whom was the celebrated practitioner from the Worgaia tribe to whom we have referred as taking a prominent part in the Wollunqua ceremonies, and, as the case was evidently a serious one, they were all called in consultation. It was a very solemn scene. Quite privately each man probably knew that individually he was a fraud, but it is wonderful what a savage can make himself believe. At all events each man genuinely believed in the power of the others, and more especially in the Worgaia man, who came from distant parts and whose magic was therefore more potent than that of the local medicine men. After a long silence, followed by a solemn deliberation, during which the Worgaia men had first gazed fiercely and fixedly on the patient and had then blown hard into his ear and "sung" over him, he gave his opinion that the bone of a dead man, attracted by the camp fire, had entered the patient's body and was causing all the trouble. Of the four Warramunga practitioners the oldest one, after further examination of the patient's body, said that while he fully agreed with the opinion of the great Worgaia man, there was something further that the latter had overlooked, which was that, in addition to the bone, an "arabillia," or gnarled wart of a gum-tree trunk, had somehow got into the sufferer's body and was causing trouble. A dead man's bone and a gum-tree wart formed rather a serious combination, and it was decided that they must be removed.

Under cover of darkness the bone was first removed, bit by bit, after much sucking and rubbing of the patient's body. The wooden wart proved to be more serious. Prolonged rubbing and sucking succeeded in forcing it down below the level of the patient's ribs, and then hair girdles were tied tightly round his body to prevent it from passing upward again. At last, after strenuous exertions, the medicine men were just on the point of successfully removing it, when unfortunately the patient died.

Late one afternoon, just before sunset, and immediately after the performance of several sacred ceremonies, we were all leaving the corrobboree ground when a sudden loud piercing wail broke out in the direction of the man's camp. Every one knew that this meant that the man was dead or dying, and with one accord all the men, including the decorated performers, ran pell-mell, as hard as they could, towards the camp, most of them at the same time beginning to howl. A deep creek lay between us and the camp, and on its bank some of the men sat down, scattered about here and there, bending their heads forwards between their knees while they wept and moaned loudly. Crossing the creek we found that, as usual, the man's camp had been pulled to pieces. Some of the women, according to custom, had thrown themselves prostrate on the body, while others were standing or kneeling about, digging the sharp ends of fighting clubs and yam sticks into the crown of their heads, from which the blood streamed down their faces. All of them were howling and wailing at the top of their voices. Many of the men, rushing up, threw themselves upon the body, from which the women arose as the men approached, until in a minute or two we could see nothing but a struggling mass of bodies (Fig. 303). One man had been to his camp for a stone knife, and now rushed up yelling and brandishing



Fig. 303. DEATH SCENE, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

The men are lying upon and sitting around the dying man. The women are wailing loudly and beckoning towards some men who are running up cutting themselves with stone knives. The decorated men have just been performing a totemic ceremony.



Fig. 304. A CHILD'S TREE GRAVE, KAITISH TRIBE.
The body is placed in the pitchi which is lying on the top of the boughs.



Fig. 305. TREE GRAVE OF AN ADULT.

his knife in the air. Suddenly he jumped into the group of men, gashed both his thighs deeply, cutting right across the muscles, and, unable to stand, fell down into the middle of the group, from which he was dragged after a time by three or four female relatives—his mother, wife and sisters—who immediately applied their mouths to the gaping wounds, while he lay exhausted on the ground. Another man came up making just as much noise, prancing about and apparently gashing his thighs, but in his case it was merely pretence. Each time that he yelled and pretended to cut himself he only drew the flat side of his knife across his thigh, and so inflicted nothing more serious than a few scratches.

Gradually the struggling mass of dark bodies began to loosen, and then we could see that the unfortunate man underneath was not actually dead, though, as can easily be imagined, there was not much life left in him. The weeping and wailing still continued, and the sun went down, leaving the camp in darkness. Later in the evening, when the man actually died, the same scene was enacted, only this time the wailing was still louder and the excitement more intense; men and women, apparently frantic with grief, were rushing about cutting themselves with knives and sharp-pointed sticks, the women battering one another's heads with fighting clubs, no one attempting to ward off either cuts or blows. There was no light, save that from a few scattered fires, and it was difficult to believe that the naked, howling, prancing figures, smeared with dirt and streaming with blood, were really those of human beings. It was a fiendish scene. Without more than an hour's delay a small torchlight procession started off across the plains to a belt of timber a mile away, and there the body was left on a platform built of boughs in a low gum tree (Figs. 304, 305).

During the night all the camps were demolished and shifted across the creek, the only trace left in the morning being a small low mound of earth, called Kakiti, piled on the actual spot on which the man had died; and around this the ground was carefully smoothed down for a few feet in all directions. Every camp was moved to a considerable distance, because no one was anxious to meet either the spirit—the Ungwulan—of the dead man, which would be hovering about the spot, or that of the man who had brought about the death by evil magic, as it would probably come to visit the place in the form of an animal. The man was said by the medicine men to have died because he had deliberately violated tribal custom, and this had laid him open to an attack of evil magic on the part of some enemy, though exactly whom it was not as yet known—that would be found out later on.

All sacred ceremonies were suspended, and the whole camp entered with zest into the very serious business of performing properly the various mourning ceremonies. The etiquette of mourning is elaborate, and the omission to do what was proper would indicate a want of respect which would be much resented by the dead man's spirit. On the camping ground several men were lying *hors de combat* with gashed thighs. They had done their duty, and henceforth in token of this would be marked with deep scars. On one of these men we counted no fewer than twenty-three such scars that had been inflicted at different times (Fig. 306). Everything is hedged round with definite rules, and when a man of any particular class dies it is men who stand in a particular relationship to him who must cut themselves. On this occasion it was men who stood to the dead man in the tribal relationship of grandfathers on the mother's side, mother's brothers or brothers-in-law, brothers of the mother of his wife, and wife's brothers.



Fig. 306. MAN WITH GASHED THIGH, DURING MOURNING CEREMONIES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

The wound is made to gape as widely as possible by being tightly tied round on either side.



Fig. 307. TWO WIDOWS ON THE MORNING AFTER A MAN'S DEATH.

They have daubed themselves over with pipe-clay and built a small lean-to of boughs.

The tribal fathers had cut their whiskers off, and others had cut their hair off closely and smeared their scalps with pipe-clay. The leg of the man who had most deeply gashed himself was held by his father, who, in turn, was embraced from behind by an aged man—the father-in-law of the patient—as if to support him in his grief. Sundry other men came up, one after the other, and there was a succession of embracings, accompanied by alternate howling and moaning. Most of this was merely a matter of etiquette, and had no reference to any genuine feeling of regret. If a man, who stands in a particular relationship to you, happens to die, you must do the proper thing, which may be either gashing your thigh or cutting your hair, quite regardless of whether you were personally acquainted with the dead man or whether he was your dearest friend or greatest enemy.

The women, meanwhile, were taking a very active share in the proceedings. The dead man had left behind him two widows, who, according to custom, had gone far away from the old camp, cut off all their hair, smeared themselves over with pipe-clay from head to foot, and were now seated, wailing, under the shelter of a few boughs which they had fixed in the ground, so as to make a small wurley for themselves, to one side of the main camp (Fig. 307). The only personal belongings that they had been allowed to retain were their yam sticks. Early in the morning the two widows, in company with two tribal sisters, came towards a place where a group of men were seated. An old man, who was a tribal brother of the widows, arose, went towards them and, after striking their yam sticks with a club, they all sat down on the ground embracing one another. After a few minutes the man left them, and the women began to wail and cut their scalps. This went on for some time, and then they arose and approached the

lubras' camp, where forty or fifty women were assembled (Fig. 308). The latter came out in small bands of perhaps six or eight at a time, every one carrying a yam stick. After a series of sham fights they all sat down in groups with their arms round one another, weeping and wailing frantically, while the actual and tribal wives of the dead man, together with his mother, wives' mothers, daughters, sisters, mothers' mothers, sisters' husbands' mothers, and granddaughters, once more cut their scalps with yam sticks (Fig. 310). The actual widows afterwards seared their scalp wounds with a red-hot fire-stick.

Altogether it was a most extraordinary scene, and the women seated on the ground with their arms round one another (Fig. 309) looked very much like a number of apes crouching close together. After the women had finished this part of the performance, one of the elder ones, who was a tribal mother of the dead man, brought up all the effects of the latter and placed them, weeping as she did so, on the knees of an old man who was her tribal brother—that is, he stood to the dead man in the relationship of mother's brother. With him there was a younger man belonging to the same class as himself but to a younger generation—he was in fact a man who would normally marry the daughter of a man belonging to the same class as the dead man, who would thus be his father-in-law.

The old man opened the bundles, which consisted of boomerangs, clubs, pitchis, tomahawks, hair girdles, etc., and asked the younger one which he would take, pressing him first of all to take them all. This of course was only a matter of etiquette, and he replied, "No, I will take the clubs and boomerangs: you take the other things." The result was that everything passed over into the possession of men who belonged to the side



Fig. 308. WOMEN CHALLENGING ONE ANOTHER TO FIGHT AND CUT THEIR HEADS DURING MOURNING CEREMONIES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

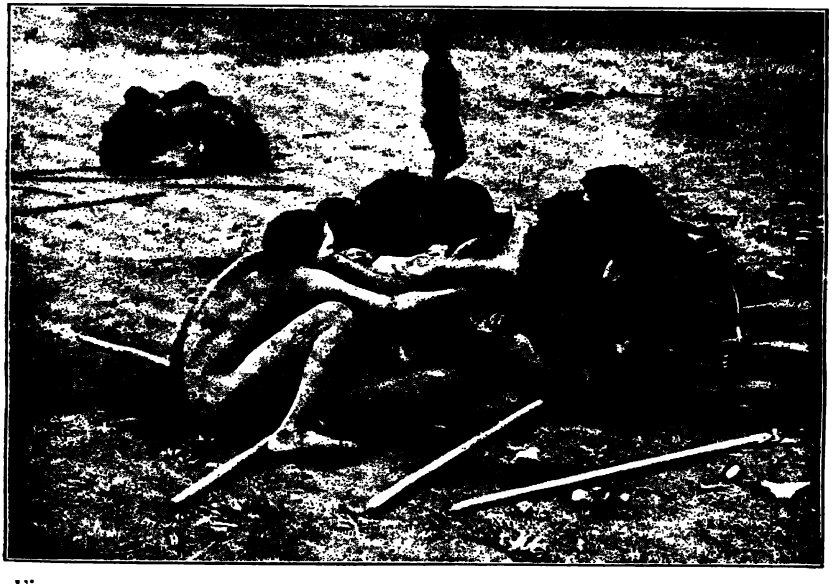


Fig. 309. WOMEN EMBRACING AND WAILING AFTER CUTTING THEIR HEADS DURING THE MOURNING CEREMONIES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

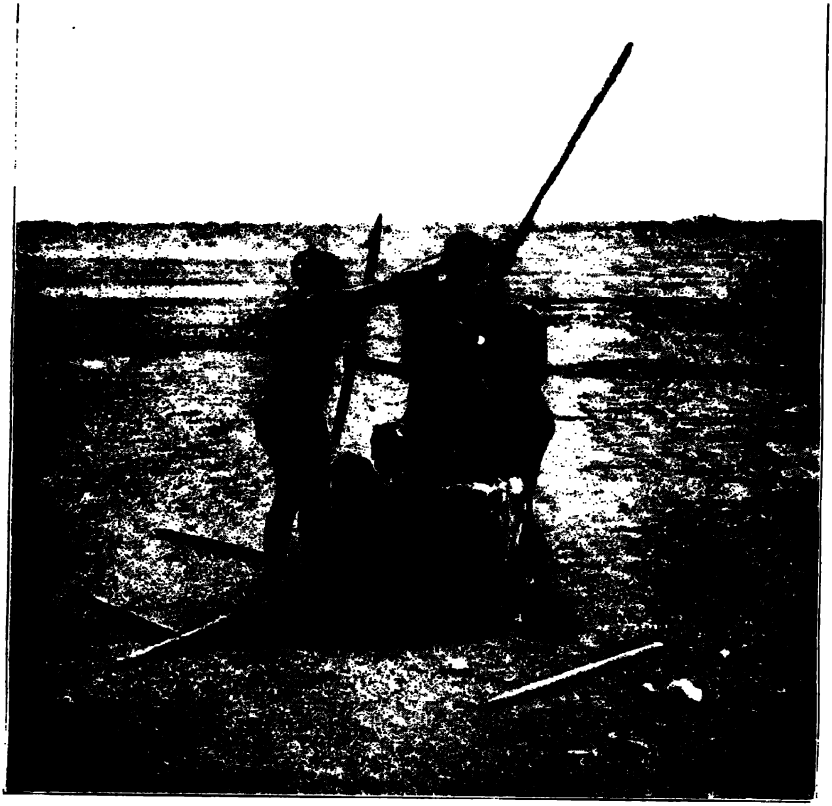


Fig. 310. GROUP OF WOMEN CUTTING THEIR HEADS WITH YAM STICKS DURING MOURNING CEREMONIES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

of the tribe to which the dead man's mother and wife belonged.

These ceremonies occupied the whole of the day, and next morning we found that there was great trouble in the camp. One of the older men had discovered that the knife with which he had gashed his thigh was supposed to have been "sung"—that is, endowed with evil magic. A man from the northern part of the tribe was sent for, in order that he might "sing" over the wound and thus remove the evil influence, but when he came he said he was unable to do anything. The knife had been "sung" by a native belonging to a distant tribe, and he did not know the special song that was necessary to remove the evil influence.

If the old man once became convinced that the magic could not be removed, he would probably make up his mind that he must die. There was nothing for it but to act promptly, so we told him that we were quite capable of getting rid of it by means of a powerful incantation that had been taught to one of us for use in such a case as this by the wise old men of the Arunta tribe. We made him light a small fire and then, whilst he knelt over the smoke arising from it, holding in both hands the blade of the magic knife, we chanted solemnly the words, "Limaperta arungquiltha etirra ura ulquinai," repeating them time after time. The incantation was a very simple one. Being translated literally it means, "Go back evil magic quickly fire eat up." Fortunately it had the desired effect. The old man and his friends were much relieved, and in a very short time he was quite well again and convinced that the evil magic had departed from him.

We, also, were much relieved because this old man was a person of great consequence in the tribe, and if he had insisted on dying, the ceremonies would have come to an abrupt end. Three days afterwards we were awakened early

in the morning by a man who told us that they were going to visit the tree grave in order to try and find out who was guilty of killing the dead man. We had no idea as to what they intended to do, but at 3 a.m. we left the camp in company with five of the natives, two of whom were brothers, one a mother's brother, one a father, and the other a wife's father of the dead man. The two latter sneaked across the plains, travelling in a more or less direct route towards the tree grave, while the others, with whom we went, followed a very roundabout course. For two miles, in the dim light, we walked quietly along the bed of a creek, the high banks of which prevented us from being seen by any one on the plains, on which the two men who had gone ahead of us dodged about from shrub to shrub. The object of all this secrecy was to catch sight of the grave without, if possible, alarming or being seen by the spirit of the murderer, if it should chance to be hovering around. As we stole quietly along across the plain from the creek, the natives, and of course we followed their lead, took advantage of every bit of scrub that was available, gliding across the open ground from one patch of shelter to the next, until we were well within sight of the tree. Whilst still in shelter the two parties communicated with one another by means of gesture language, but neither had seen anything representing a spirit hovering around, so we all came out into the open and approached the grave. A careful search was made round the base of the tree in the hope of finding some track, but without success, and, just as the sun rose, two of the men climbed up, lifted the boughs above the body of the dead man and carefully examined it (Fig. 311). Some fresh boughs were added to the grave and then we returned to camp, visiting the Kakiti on our way—that is, the little mound of earth raised on the spot on which the man died. This also was very carefully



Fig. 311. VISIT TO TREE GRAVE AT SUNRISE, A FEW DAYS AFTER THE DEATH OF A MAN, TO TRY TO DISCOVER SOME CLUE TO THE SUPPOSED MURDERER, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

The men in the tree are examining the body.



Fig. 312. CLIMBING UP TO THE TREE GRAVE IN ORDER TO RAKE THE BONES OUT ON TO THE GROUND, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 313. RAKING THE BONES INTO A BARK DISH.



Fig. 314. BURYING THE BONES IN AN ANT-HILL, WARRAMU'NGA TRIBE.

examined with the object of seeing whether it showed traces of having been visited by any animal such as a dingo, kangaroo or bird. If there had been a track left on the earth made by any special animal, then it would show that an individual belonging to the totemic group named after, and associated with, that animal was responsible for the man's death. The mound was perfectly smooth and untouched, and there was not the slightest indication of any animal—bird or beast—having visited it, so we returned to our camp without having been able to gain any clue as to the culprit. Sooner or later, however, the guilt would be fixed upon some one and an avenging party sent out to punish him.

After these ceremonies have been performed, the tree grave remains undisturbed for at least a year and usually longer still. The dead man's spirit, called Ungwulan, hovers about the tree and sometimes visits the camp, watching, if it be that of a man, to see that the widows are mourning properly. There are even times when it can be heard making a low, whistling sound. When the brother thinks it is getting near the time to perform the final ceremonies, he goes to the tree and, addressing the spirit, says, "Shall I go away?" If he says "Yes," he returns at once to camp, and it is often only after several such enquiries have been made that the spirit tells the man that it wishes the period of mourning to come to an end. When its consent has been obtained, the brother tells the dead man's father-in-law, who immediately makes arrangements for the final ceremony.

We saw two of these—one connected with the remains of a man and another with those of a woman. They were precisely similar to one another in all important features, no more respect being shown to the remains of the man than to those of the woman, which is partly, no doubt, to

be associated with the fact that the Warramunga believe that the sex of the individual alternates at each reincarnation —a dead man being subsequently reborn as a woman and *vice versâ*.

Early one morning in the middle of August we started off before sunrise to visit the grave of a woman whose body had been placed on a tree platform a year ago. The party consisted of ourselves and three natives, two brothers of the mother of the dead woman's husband and one who was her tribal son though old enough to be her brother. Just as we left the camp, where all was perfectly silent, the father of the dead woman came up to us and gave a ball of fur string to the oldest of the three men, and then we set off in the dim light, wondering what we were going to see. The tree was about a mile and a half away from the camp in a lonely spot. Its trunk was perfectly white, and amongst the branches we could see the platform on which the bones, now bleached, were lying. The youngest man cut a bark dish from a gum tree close by, and then, just as the sun rose, throwing long shadows across the level ground, he cut steps in the trunk and climbed on to the platform (Fig. 312). With the aid of a stick, so as to avoid actually touching the bones, he raked them all out on to the ground below and then clambered down. First of all one of the arm bones (a radius) was placed by itself on a sheet of paperbark and put on one side. When this had had been done, the youngest man smashed the skull into fragments with a tomahawk, and then all the bones except the radius were raked into the bark dish (Fig. 313). We wondered what was going to be done with them, and had not long to wait. As soon as they had been gathered together, the youngest man carried the dish with its contents to a white-ant hill two or three hundred yards away. Here one of the elder men took the dish from him, knocked off the top



Fig. 315. WRAPPING THE ARM-BONE UP IN PAPERBARK, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.



Fig. 316. GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN AWAITING THE BRINGING IN OF THE ARM-BONE OF A DEAD PERSON.



Fig. 317. BRINGING IN THE ARM-BONE.
The man on the left side is just handing the bone in its covering of paperbark to a man who is seated on the ground.



Fig. 318. GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN SITTING ON THE GROUND WAILING AND WEEPING OVER THE BONE.

of the mound, slid the bones down into the cavity in the centre, and then replaced the top of the ant-hill (Fig. 314). No one, except perhaps a native, would for a moment suspect that the latter was the grave monument of a blackfellow.

The whole ceremony only occupied a very short time, and when it was over we returned to the spot where the arm bone had been left. The oldest man took this and wrapped it up carefully in paperbark, around which he twined the fur string that had been given to him when we left camp by the father of the dead woman (Fig. 315). The whole made a torpedo-shaped parcel about eighteen inches long and three or four in diameter, one end being decorated with a bundle of emu feathers—in the case of a man, owl feathers are used. It was placed in the hollow trunk of a gum tree and left there, while the three men went off for a day into the scrub in search of game, which, according to custom, they had to bring in to the father of the dead woman. As there was nothing more to be seen we returned to camp, and on the next day a messenger came in from the three men to say that they were returning late in the afternoon and were bringing the bone with them.

The lubras were at once instructed to prepare themselves for the ceremony, and, under the guidance of a few old women who had been through the performance before, they spent several hours painting the upper part of their bodies with red ochre and longitudinal lines of yellow reaching down to their waists. When the time drew near, a number of old men assembled at a little distance from the main camp and sat in solemn silence, with the father of the dead woman in the middle of the front line. Just before sunset, word came into the camp, from watchers on the look-out, that the three men with the bone had been seen in the distance. The women and

children were at once summoned and came up, grouping themselves behind the men, who were seated on the ground, every one perfectly silent and all with their heads bowed down (Fig. 316). A long way off we could see the three men approaching in single file. Each of them had green twigs hanging down over his forehead and tied under his arm bands. The front man carried the bone hidden under a bunch of small boughs: the second carried the meat offering, also hidden under boughs; and the third carried boughs only. Twice they walked quickly round the group of men and women, and at the completion of the second round the leader bent down and placed the bone in its bark on the knees of the father of the dead woman, the second immediately laid the meat offering at his feet, and then without a moment's pause the three retired quickly out of sight and took no further part in the ceremony (Fig. 317). The handing over of the bone was the signal for the women to sit down, and while the men bent prostrate in silence over it, the former broke out into a loud piercing wail, which became louder still when the old father passed the bone behind him to one of his tribal sisters—a very old woman—in whose charge it was to remain until the final ceremony took place (Fig. 318). After a time some of the women arose and cut their thighs, while others cut their scalps with sharpened clubs (Fig. 319). When this was over they retired to their camps, leaving the men seated in silence.

Nothing further was done in connection with the bone for seventeen days, during which the men were busy every day performing sacred ceremonies. The most important of these were connected with a snake totem, and it was decided that the final burial ceremony should take place at the close of one special performance in which a considerable number of men were to take part. The dead



Fig. 319. GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN AFTER THE ARM-BONE HAS BEEN BROUGHT IN.

On the right side the women are seen cutting one another's thighs, and in the middle one woman is cutting her scalp with a boomerang. The central man has placed his left hand on a large "damper" or loaf which is being given to the men by the women.



Fig. 320. GROUP OF OLD WOMEN WAITING IN CAMP UNTIL SUMMONED TO THE CEREMONIAL GROUND.

One with her face daubed over with pipe-clay has the arm-bone in its case between her legs, another has a pitchi containing cooked snakes which will be given to the old men.



Fig. 321. FINAL BURIAL CEREMONIES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
Men standing over trench, the women approaching with the arm-bone.

woman was the daughter of the head man of the snake totem, to which she also belonged. On this final day of the ceremonies a special drawing was made on the ground representing the old snake, together with a water-hole where he went into the ground and certain sacred trees near by, where he left spirit children behind him. Ten men were elaborately decorated with designs of red, white and yellow, the exact nature of which can be seen in the illustrations. Word was sent to the women to have everything ready, and on going to their camp we found a group of six of the older ones seated away from the rest looking abjectly miserable. The oldest woman, with her face daubed over with pipe-clay, had charge of the arm bone in its case, while another held on her knees a pitchi containing a few cooked snakes, which were intended as an offering to the old men (Fig. 320).

The women were not, of course, allowed to see the ceremony, and as soon as the performance was over a trench about a foot deep and fifteen feet in length was dug on the corrobboree ground, a few yards to one side of the drawing. Close to the latter a little pit was dug by an old man who had charge of the ceremony. The ten performers arranged themselves in a line, with their legs straddled across the trench, each man with his hands clasped behind his head (Fig. 321). All the other men who had been watching the ceremony sat beside the painting, so that this was practically hidden from the sight of the women, who were now called up from their camp and came across the creek on to the ceremonial ground in perfect silence, one aged woman directing them by signs what to do. We were watching their movements with much interest, quite ignorant of what was going to take place. As they approached the trench they could see only the backs of the men, and came on, at first in a dense group,

with the woman carrying the bone in the rear and slightly to one side. Coming nearer they fell into single file, and then, without a pause, each woman came forward, fell down on hands and knees, and in this way crawled along the length of the trench under the straddled legs of the men. Passing out, they stood up and arranged themselves in a group some little distance away, with their backs turned towards the men, so that they could see neither them nor the sacred painting on the ground (Fig. 322). Each woman held her arms high up and her hands clasped behind her head, just as the decorated men did. The file of women rapidly passed through, the last to do so being the one who carried the bone. As she rose to her feet it was snatched from her by a brother of the dead woman and carried across to where the old man, armed with a stone axe, stood beside the little pit in the ground (Fig. 323). The young man held out the bone in its covering of paper-bark, and with a single blow the old man smashed it, and then it was at once thrust down into the little pit dug beside the emblem of the dead woman's totem (Fig. 324). The moment that the women heard, though they did not see, the blow of the axe they fled away, shrieking, across the creek to their camp, and there in the distance we could hear them wailing. After a few moments most of the men rose and went silently to their camps, but for some time the father of the dead woman, together with a few other men of his own side of the tribe, remained bowed down on the ground, while one of the decorated men filled in the little pit with earth and closed the opening with a large flat stone. The whole ceremony was very picturesque and impressive; more especially the final act when the bone was buried beside the sacred drawing, indicating, as it were, that the dead woman had been gathered unto her totem.



Fig. 322. FINAL BURIAL CEREMONIES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

Women crawling along the trench. The last woman carries behind her back the arm-bone in its decorated sheath of paperbark.



Fig. 323. FINAL BURIAL CEREMONIES, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.
Breaking the arm-bone, which is then buried in the small hole seen behind the right leg of the man holding the bone.



Fig. 324. FINAL BURIAL CEREMONIES.
Placing the bone in the ground and filling the little pit with earth.

The illustrations will give some idea of the ceremony, but the reader will understand that it is very difficult to watch carefully what is taking place, and at the same time be in a position, at the critical moment, to take a snap-shot of any specially interesting part of the performance, when one has not the slightest idea, from moment to moment, of what is about to take place.

By special permission of the old men we were allowed to unearth, at a later date, the broken bone in its decorated wrapping. This is now in the Melbourne Museum, and forms a very interesting memento of one of the most picturesque ceremonies that we witnessed.

No white men save ourselves had ever witnessed in its entirety the series of ceremonies associated with the death and burial of a Central Australian native, and it is very doubtful if any one will have the chance of doing so again, unless he lives in close contact with them and is very intimately acquainted with what they are doing. It was by the merest chance that the time of the death of a native and that of holding the bone ceremony coincided and gave us the opportunity of watching the performance of the whole series.

CHAPTER XX

TENNANT CREEK TO POWELL CREEK

THE last few days of our stay at Tennant Creek were not altogether comfortable. The sacred ceremonies continued without intermission and kept us very busy, but, except the one that was enacted on the last night, there was very little variation amongst them. For this one a few of the men were occupied all day making a huge torpedo-shaped bundle called "Miniurka," about twelve feet long by three feet in diameter. It contained about forty wands, each made of a central stick on to which twigs of gum tree were tied. The outside covering was composed of sheets of paperbark wound round and round with human hair string, of which there must have been some hundreds of yards employed. It took the whole of the day to make, only a very few men being allowed to take part in the preparation, and at sunset, when it was finished, it was hidden away under the bank of a creek. What it all meant we could not find out exactly, except that it was in some way connected with an old tradition referring to the fact that, in ancient days, the Uluuru men of the tribe had given light and warmth to the Kingilli men, who had previously been living in cold and darkness. The wands were associated with fire, and were strikingly suggestive of those used as torches during the fire ceremony. We had already seen

a very quaint ceremony called "Tappin," in which the Kingilli men were represented as crouching down on the ground, all huddled together in the cold, and this was associated with the same tradition (Fig. 325). At 9.30 p.m. we went to the spot where the Miniurka was concealed with some of the natives who, to the accompaniment of loud cries of "Wu-wu-wu," carried it on their shoulders to the ceremonial ground, where it was deposited. A few fires were lighted and then the men began to sing over it as loudly as they could, amidst the incessant clanging of boomerangs and clubs. As this was to continue all night long, we decided to return to our camp for a few hours' sleep. Some time before sunrise we were up again, and just as we reached the ground the main body of men, who had spent the night in the bed of the creek, were brought up by one of those who had been "singing" the bundle. Behind the Miniurka stood the men who had made it, some singing, others beating their boomerangs and clubs, and all of them in a state of great excitement, waving their arms, pointing to the bundle and beckoning the other men to come near. The latter affected the keenest surprise, opening their eyes wide, throwing their arms forward and their bodies backward as if they were greatly astonished. One by one they came up to it, the oldest man amongst them first, with a grotesque prancing kind of movement. He tried unsuccessfully to lift up one end of the Miniurka, but it was evident that he was only pretending to do so. Then one of those who had made it handed him a bunch of eagle-hawk feathers, with which he brushed it over from end to end. This little performance was enacted by every man, and whilst it was going on the men who had made the Miniurka pranced about backwards and forwards, singing and yelling, one old man in his

excitement tumbling head over heels backwards over the bundle, which quieted him down for a time and much amused the others. When every one had brushed it, they sat down for a few minutes and then three of them got up and ran away over the creek. We followed them to see what was going to happen. They made a wide circle so as to come up behind the women, who were camped in the bed of the creek a quarter of a mile away. We took a short cut across towards the lubras' camp, and close by this, came upon two boys who had recently been initiated and were crouching down under cover of some bushes. The three men came round behind the lubras, shouting loudly, and as soon as they were within about fifty yards of the boys, up these two jumped and ran for their lives towards the ceremonial ground, followed by the boomerangs of the three men. We kept carefully to one side of the line of fire and managed to arrive on the scene, more or less breathless, just in time to see the boys received by the older men, who then showed them the big bundle and explained to them that it signified the giving of fire and warmth to one half of the tribe by the other half. That was all that we could find out definitely as to its meaning.

This was the last ceremony that we saw amongst the Warramunga, and a few hours later we left our camp at Tennant Creek and were once more on the northern track. For two days we travelled along across very uninteresting country. There was nothing to be seen except a wide open plain covered with poor scrub. On the evening of the second day we camped at Attack Creek (Fig. 326), one of the most interesting spots in Central Australia, because it was here that, more than fifty years ago—in 1860—McDouall Stuart, one of the greatest of our Australian explorers, was attacked by the natives



Fig. 325. TAPPIN CEREMONY, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE (p. 441).



Fig. 326. ATTACK CREEK.

—hence the name of the creek—and forced to relinquish, for the time being, his attempt to cross the continent. A day or two before reaching Attack Creek, Stuart came across a few natives, one of whom was an old man, whom he describes as being very talkative and friendly. He endeavoured without success, by means of signs, to get information as to the whereabouts of the waterholes. To Stuart's surprise, however, the old man, after conferring with the younger men, turned round and, in the words of Stuart's narrative,[1] "surprised me by giving me one of the masonic signs. I looked at him steadily; he repeated it, and so did his two sons. I then returned it, which seemed to please them much, the old man patting me on the shoulder and stroking down my beard. They then took their departure, making friendly signs until they were out of sight." Two days later he discovered Attack Creek and followed it down for some distance. The natives were decidedly unfriendly. They gathered together in considerable numbers, "and commenced jumping, dancing, yelling and throwing their arms into all sorts of postures like so many fiends." According to Stuart the attack was of such a serious nature that he felt compelled to fire upon the natives, and as his party was only a very small one, he fell back, and in his journal of June 27th he writes: "After considering the matter over the whole night, I have most reluctantly come to the determination to abandon the attempt to make the Gulf of Carpentaria."

Amongst the natives whom we met at Tennant Creek was a very old man of the Warramunga tribe who had actually taken part in the attack upon Stuart's party, and

[1] *Explorations in Australia*, p. 213. The probable explanation of this is that certain of the signs in their gesture language corresponded closely enough with certain masonic signs to be mistaken by Stuart for the latter.

from what he told us, we came to the conclusion that Stuart rather exaggerated the capacity of the natives to hinder his progress northwards.

We spent a very pleasant evening by the side of the waterhole, watching flocks of white cockatoos coming in to drink at sunset. The natives had assured us that, after the performance of the cockatoo ceremony which we had seen, the birds were quite sure to increase in number; and here they were by the score. We were up next morning at sunrise and started off at 7 a.m. The country was very miserable with every now and then small dry creeks, crossing which we jolted over rough boulders. Fortunately the buckboard that carried our light impedimenta was very strongly built, with the result that only one bolt was broken.

This was one of the hottest days that we experienced. The thin, meagre mulga trees and Hakeas, comprising the scanty scrub, gave practically no shade. Our little terrier spent the whole day, when it was not riding with us, in running on ahead of us from the shelter of one thin tree trunk to another. Every bit of metal on the buckboard became too hot to touch, and when walking along the heat struck through the soles of our boots. It was one of those days when the natives, with their bare feet, remain in camp unable to endure the earth temperature. Everything was, of course, absolutely dry; there was no water after leaving Attack Creek, and all day long the sun shone fiercely. It was a great relief, late in the afternoon, to turn off from the track by the telegraph line into somewhat better country, and to reach a little outlying station placed by the side of a small spring of water called by the natives Banka Banka. A small patch of bright green herbage indicated the position of the spring, which bubbled up

beside a low hill. The evaporation at this time of the year, however, was so great that there was no stream flowing away from it, except for a very short distance. The "station" itself consisted of a small, roughly-built, log hut. There was no floor except the bare earth, and the sum total of furniture was made up of one box, one form, and one deal table. It is under conditions such as these that many of the Australian pioneers have lived whilst opening up the country. The owner was a splendid old bushman, to whom most of the Northern Territory was well known. We had met him previously at Tennant Creek and he made us heartily welcome at Banka Banka, where amongst other things he gave us a feast of real fresh eggs, one of the most enjoyable meals that we had had since leaving Adelaide. One of us had six and the other thirteen, after which there were no more left. There were plenty of chinks between the logs in the walls of the hut to allow the fresh air, dust and flies to come in, but a large part of the wall space was occupied by a gallery of portraits of prizefighters—eighteen of them altogether—the only other individuals who were allowed to figure among them being Gladstone, Banjo Paterson and Kruger, who were kept in their places by overlapping prints of Kid McCoy, Peter Jackson, Fitzsimmons, and other celebrities of the same kind. We spent a most interesting evening with him, listening to tales of his experiences during early days in the far north, over which he had wandered during the past thirty years and more, and to his accounts of the country that we had still to traverse, where blue bush swamps, with chasms big enough to swallow horse and man, and snakes of ferocious nature abounded. We had, however, long before this learned to take tales of the far north *cum grano*. There is a sense of

bigness in the country that is apt to find its way into the tales.

Leaving Banka Banka, we passed across a little bit of what is called "Down" country. Our track along the telegraph line unfortunately led us over some of the poorest land in the Centre, with, in this part, nothing but thin scrub and porcupine grass and low quartzite ranges rising every now and then. Away to the east, stretching across to the Queensland border, lies what is known as the tableland or Down country—splendidly grassed plains which, granted the normal rainfall, are of immense value for stock purposes. The tableland has an average elevation of 2,000 feet, and at various places bores have been sunk yielding a good water supply. At the Alexandra station, for example, there is one that goes down for 1,664 feet, the water rising to within 200 feet of the surface, so that by pumping a daily supply of 2,400 gallons can be secured. The few stations on the tableland are, at the present time, mostly dependent for their supply on the water which, after the heavy summer rains, lies in the shallow lagoons. When rain does fall, the whole country is transformed for a time into a huge swamp, over which it is impossible to travel until the surface waters sink into the ground; but when once they have dried up, there are vast areas covered with rich feed, though with only a scanty surface supply of water. Artificial storage and the tapping of the subterranean supply will probably solve the water difficulty. There is undoubtedly plenty, if only it can be rendered available all the year round; and there is only one opinion, granted the solution of the water difficulty, in regard to the enormous capacity of the Downs and tableland country for stock-raising purposes.

The first night out of Banka Banka we camped by the

side of a rapidly drying-up waterhole called Prentice Lagoon. It was merely a muddy flat with just a shallow pool of milky-looking water. Fortunately we had filled our canteens with clear water, and the horses were quite contented with that in the lagoon.

We left camp in the morning before 7 a.m., and for some hours plodded on monotonously over sand-hills and across rough stony creeks, until we reached a small plain with low quartzite ranges around it. Close to its northern boundary there was a clump of green trees, with fresh herbage; and here we found another spring, or rather a small group of springs, bubbling out of black, clayey soil. It was just a little oasis in the otherwise dry country, but here again, as at Banka Banka, the evaporation was so great that the water only trickled away for a few yards. Its temperature was 90° F. These springs were discovered by the construction party on the overland telegraph line, and were named after Renner, one of the medical officers. At a later period the land was taken up and station buildings were erected close by the springs. Years ago they were deserted, and at the time of our visit they were in ruins and only inhabited by white ants, scorpions, centipedes, spiders, lizards, snakes and bats—all of which we collected.

When we reached the place a strong east wind was blowing, raising clouds of dust. The flies had congregated on the sheltered side of the ruined house, and we had to choose between flies and hot, dust-laden wind. Fortunately for us, two natives came in, and we were able to watch them making their stone knives. It was most interesting to see these two men chipping the little blocks of quartzite until they secured flakes that would serve as knives and spear-heads. The quarry is littered around with flakes which, from time immemorial, have been

chipped off and discarded as not being suitable for use. There are now only very few natives who are adepts in the art of stone chipping and flaking, for the iron has almost entirely superseded the stone knife, even in this remote part of Australia, and the quarry at Renner's Springs remains as one of the few traces of the old Stone Age that is now fast disappearing.

The next day's journey brought us to Powell Creek (Fig. 327). On the way we had to cross a succession of stony creeks, coming down from low ranges to the east of the track. We broke four bolts in the fore-carriage of the buckboard and began to wonder whether it would hold together till we reached the station, but by good luck it did.

While enjoying the comfort of the station and the hospitality of our friends, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Kell, we were almost tempted to forget that there was anything uncomfortable connected with travelling in Central Australia. It is a wonderful relief, after six months' camping-out, to have a meal properly served and everything as nice as possible. The station itself is a picturesque bungalow placed on a slight rise amongst low hills and surrounded by shady Bauhenia trees, with a picturesque pool of water in the creek close by, overhung by gums and paperbarks (Fig. 328). Bean trees, Bauhenias, bananas and palms gave a semi-tropical touch to the scene, and as we sat comfortably smoking in lounge chairs on the broad verandah, watching on one side the rich afterglow in the western sky, and on the other the full moon rising red in the east, it was difficult to believe that only a few hours earlier we had been jolting along over rough creek beds and ploughing through thick sand, under a blazing sun, amidst the dreariest of dreary scrub. A few miles to the south of the station, after passing



Fig. 327. POWELL CREEK STATION.

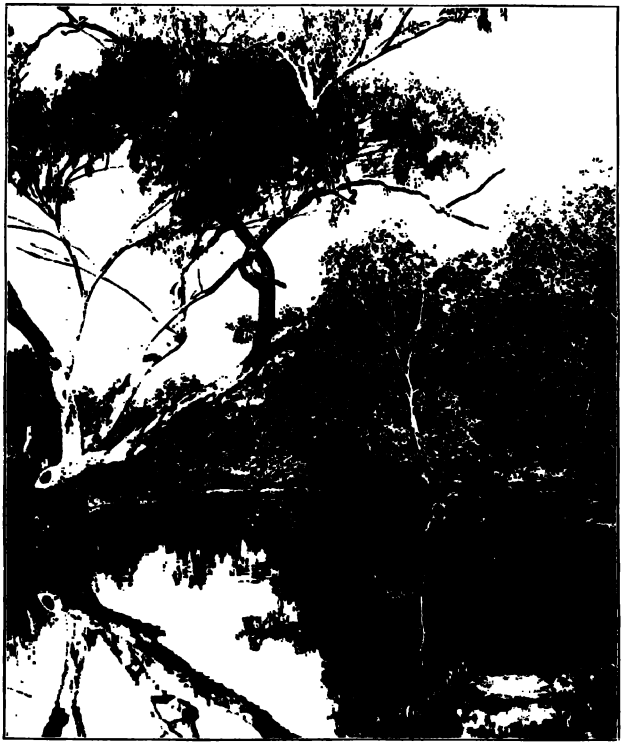


Fig. 328. WATER-POOL AT POWELL CREEK.

through a low range of hills, there had been a very marked change in the nature of the vegetation. The gum trees seemed to be thicker, and the Bauhenias, which we met with here for the first time, gave a distinct impression of shade. They have a dense foliage of small thick leaves and were covered with crimson pods, from four to six inches in length, which at sunset made the tree look as if it were on fire. One special gum tree (*Eucalyptus platypoda*) interested us a good deal. There is often a very considerable difference between the leaf of the sapling gum and that of the full-grown tree in shape, method of attachment to the stalk and size, but in this case the contrast, especially in size, was most striking. The sapling leaves were eight inches in length and six in greatest width. Gradually, as the tree grows, the leaves diminish in size, until on the mature tree, which reaches a height of sixty feet at least, with its branches widely spreading and throwing a welcome shade, they only measure from two to three inches in length and a little more than one in width. This tree is popularly called Karbeen. Further north there are at least two other gum trees, the "khaki," so called on account of the delicate light-brown colour of its trunk, and the "cabbage" gum, in which there is almost the same difference in size between the leaf of the sapling and that of the adult plant.

Close to the station there were camps belonging to the natives of the Tjingilli tribe. We found that in all essential features they were closely akin to the Warramunga tribe, adjoining them on the south, and yet they spoke a completely different dialect. It is a great puzzle how the different tribes became so sharply marked off from one another in the matter of dialect, if indeed the latter be the right term to use. These dialects are not by any means

the same thing as those of different English counties, for example: In most cases the words, quite apart from their pronunciation, are entirely different. A Warramunga man can no more understand a Tjingilli man than an Englishman can understand a Frenchman, without learning his language. It must of course always be remembered that there is no such thing as a written language anywhere in Australia, so that every word is transmitted from one generation to another by word of mouth. In strong contrast to the difference in the dialects, there is an equally marked agreement in most essential points concerning the customs and beliefs of the various tribes inhabiting the Central area. It may be taken for granted that these were developed when, under the much more favourable climatic conditions which we know existed in the far past, communication between tribes inhabiting the various parts of the interior was much more easy than it is at the present day. With the gradual desiccation of the interior, groups of tribes, and within the groups individual tribes, became segregated. With this gradual segregation, which really consisted of a drawing-in towards certain centres where in times of drought physical conditions were more favourable than elsewhere, intercommunication between the various groups and their constituent tribes became less and less frequent; and thus, in course of time, the dialects arose. While words, more or less with ease, can be modified and changed in savage tribes, it is quite otherwise in the case of customs and beliefs, more especially with those associated with sacred matters. When once these have become settled, they are of all things the least liable to change amongst savage people. Thus it has come about that, whilst there is agreement in fundamental points amongst the Central tribes in regard to organisation



Fig. 329. DECORATION OF PERFORMERS IN A CEREMONY CONNECTED WITH THE FIRE TOTEM, TJINGILLI TRIBE.



Fig. 330. CLOSE OF A CEREMONY OF THE YAM TOTEM, TJINGILLI TRIBE.

and customs, there is marked difference in regard to dialect.[1]

The Tjingilli men we engaged in the performance of a series of totemic ceremonies, which in general features were very closely similar to the very many that we had seen amongst the Warramunga at Tennant Creek. The whole series was called Wantju, and the object of their performance was to ensure the growth of the boys and girls, to make the former grow up strong and able to fight and endure, and to make the girls plump and well-formed from a native point of view. We saw ceremonies connected with the "laughing boy," fire, yam, eagle-hawk, and white-cockatoo totems (Fig. 329). In some of those of the yam totem decorated slabs were used, on a few of which the designs clearly represented yams attached to their roots; but as a general rule no relationship could be traced between the decorations and the totemic animals and plants (Fig. 331). The performance always took place just at sunset, when the decorated men, representing the different totems, came and stood in single file with their backs towards the audience, amongst whom one or two men stood up and struck their clubs with short staves. To the accompaniment of this clanging noise the performers walked out one by one, each of them usually holding a boomerang upright behind his back, and then crouched down behind a bush. The ceremonial performance was very simple. After the men had gone away there was a short pause and then the clanging was resumed, and one by one each emerged from his hiding place and, with exaggerated high knee-action, walked on to the ceremonial ground and stood with his back towards the

[1] We have dealt with this question in greater detail in *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 11–20.

audience, moving his body from side to side with a jerk as he kept time to the clanging of the clubs. His head was then suddenly pulled backwards, and the ceremony was over (Fig. 330). In the case of the white cockatoo and eagle-hawk ceremony the performers marched out imitating the cry of the bird, and continued doing so all the time they were hidden behind the bush and while they walked in again.

Etiquette counts for much amongst the natives. While we were watching a yam ceremony one of the men suddenly retired to one side, and sitting down on the ground, began to howl aloud. No one took the slightest notice of him, and it was quite evident that his grief was not proportionate to the noise that he was making. We found that some years ago his brother, now dead, used to perform one of the ceremonies; and he was supposed to be so overcome, as the recollection of his dead relative dawned upon him, that he had to retire and give vent to his feelings. There was also another little bit of etiquette that we noticed. Two or three Warramunga men were visiting the Tjingilli camp, and being fully initiated, they were of course allowed to witness the ceremonies. After having seen the latter, however, they were under a ban of silence until such time as they had made a present of food to the men in charge of the performance. This did not of course mean any great personal trouble to themselves. They sent their women folk, whom they had with them, out into the scrub to gather grass-seeds and make a damper, which, on the second night, they brought to the ceremonial ground and handed over to their hosts. The Tjingilli men, one after another, struck their heads lightly with a green gum twig, and thus released them from the ban of silence.

While we were at Powell Creek, a mail came in from

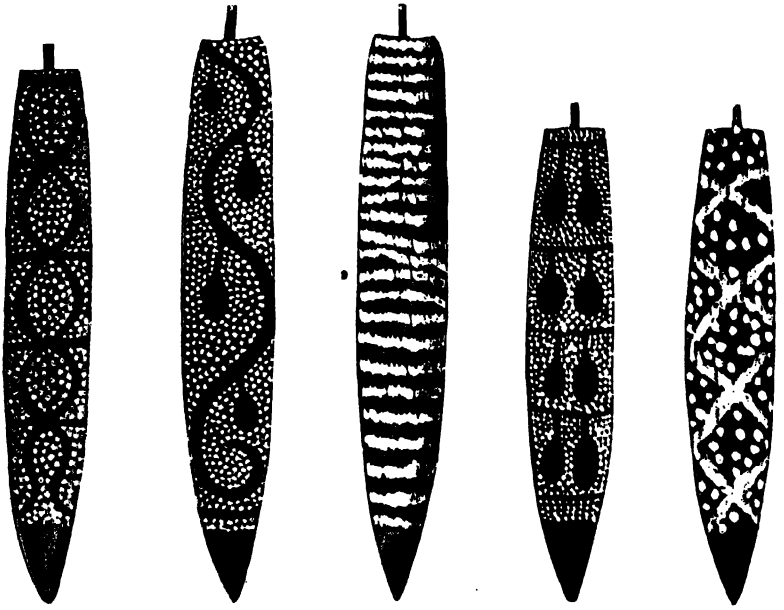


Fig. 331. DECORATED WOODEN SLABS USED DURING THE PERFORMANCE OF CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE YAM TOTEM, TJINGILLI TRIBE (p. 451).

the north bringing a welcome but somewhat belated budget of letters. Some of them had first of all been sent round *via* Adelaide up to Oodnadatta, but as they could not be sent up after us across the continent in time to catch us before we left Alice Springs—north of which there is no mail communication—they had travelled back again to Adelaide and then north *via* Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Thursday Island and Port Darwin, and then south *via* Pine Creek, on the chance of meeting us somewhere along the telegraph line. The whereabouts of travellers journeying along the latter are of course well known to the officers in charge at the different stations, and letters are forwarded as occasion offers by stray travellers, for of course in this part of the world every one helps every one else in any way he can.

CHAPTER XXI

FROM POWELL CREEK TO THE GULF OF CARPENTARIA

It was now early in October and we were within the north-west monsoonal area, where, so far as climate is concerned, the year has two divisions, a rain season extending from October to April, and a dry one from May to September. Very pleasant though it was at Powell Creek, we felt compelled to move on without delaying longer than was necessary for us to do work which was essential. The country which we had to traverse between the Powell and the Gulf of Carpentaria was liable, during the rain season, to torrential downpours that flooded the lowlands far and wide, and even when the water dried up, left them for weeks like quagmires, over which travelling was utterly impossible. As we traversed the country we saw flood wrack piled up in the tree branches, ten and twelve feet above the ground, miles away from the nearest watercourse. The only chance that any belated travellers, caught in one of these sudden floods, have of saving themselves, their horses and impedimenta, is to camp on any rising ground which may be near at hand. Here they must remain until the floods subside, sharing their island refuge with countless numbers of scorpions, centipedes, rats, lizards, snakes and creeping things innumerable that, like themselves, have succeeded in escaping from the flooded lowlands. This

is by no means an infrequent experience during the rain season, and tales are told of more unlucky travellers who have had, in the absence of rising ground, to take to the trees during the continuance of the flood. Others, still more unfortunate, have been swept away bag and baggage, leaving not a trace behind them, their bodies and everything that they possessed buried in some unknown place, deep beneath the flood wrack. It is very probable indeed that Leichardt and his party were swept away and all trace of them obliterated by one of these sudden floods.

Leaving Powell Creek we rode away to the north. Our wagon had gone on ahead and the poor old buck-board, which had served us so well, was too dilapidated to face the rough country between the telegraph line and the Gulf. We were now almost in the centre of the Lake Woods basin, across which we had been travelling ever since leaving the line of watershed in the Macdonnell Ranges, which form its northern boundary. The elevation of the Burt Plain, where we had come down on to it from the Ranges, is 2,600 feet, and we had been gradually descending until now, at Newcastle Waters, our height above sea level was only 700 feet, with the land rising slightly in every direction. We were, in fact, in the centre of a great saucer-like depression. From Powell Creek we had been travelling north, on the west side of the Ashburton Range, crossing a few creeks, such as the Fergusson, which come down from the hills and flow into the Newcastle. The latter itself rises away to the east of the Ashburton—its course has not yet been definitely marked out—flows round the northern end of the Range, and then turns abruptly south, running parallel to the latter, never more than two or three miles away from the hills, for a distance of between thirty and forty

miles, when it empties itself into Lake Woods. The term "lake" is not altogether an appropriate one to apply to this sheet of water. It is very variable indeed in extent and outline, depending entirely on the nature of the seasons, and is formed, for the most part, by the overflow of the flood waters of the Newcastle and other smaller creeks. Like Lake Eyre it has no outlet to the sea, but fortunately the northern part of this inland basin lies well within the area affected by the north-west monsoon and consequently an annual rainfall can be depended upon. The average at Powell Creek, which is right in the centre of the basin, is more than eighteen inches, and the fall increases to the north, so that this inland area has escaped the fate of the region round Lake Eyre.

As we travelled along we crossed mile after mile of country covered with herbage and sloping down to the banks of large permanent waterholes—the home of flocks of pelicans, ducks, and geese. It was now the end of the dry season, when the waterholes had shrunk to their lowest level and the herbage was at its driest. In the wet season a large part of the country round these Newcastle Waters—including the whole of the Sturt Plains, stretching away for nearly twenty miles to the north—is under water to the depth of a foot. When the water drains off, the herbage and grass that grow on the black soil are, as can be imagined, luxuriant. In all these pools the water has a very characteristic milk-white colour, due to the presence of innumerable fine white particles of clay derived from a shale formation underlying the sandstone rocks of the Ashburton Range. We could almost imagine, as we drank our quart pots of tea, that we were indulging in the unwonted luxury of milk.

The waterholes contain plenty of mussels, water snails and small fish, on which the pelicans and cormorants feed.



Fig. 332. "BAY OF BISCAY" COUNTRY.



Fig. 333. INDIARUBBER TREE.
(*Excoecaria sp.*).

Some of the mussels showed very clearly the nature of the recent seasons in this part. There was a small complete kind of shell, with a wide margin added round it, which means that the animal grew the first shell during one season and that there then came a long pause during a dry season—the relatively severe droughts of the two years previous to our visit—during which the waters receded and it could do nothing but lie in its hole in the nearly dry mud. Then, when the heavy rains fell, it set to work and grew rapidly, the newly-formed part being lighter in colour and thinner than the old part.

About seventy miles north of Powell Creek we tapped the line for the last time, "spoke" to Powell Creek in the south and Port Darwin in the north, and then turned off eastwards into the scrub. We had travelled far enough north to be able to avoid traversing the Ashburton Range, the extreme northern end of which we rounded. The country was decidedly rough—in fact, we had our first experience of what is known as "Bay of Biscay" country, a characteristic feature of this part of the Territory (Fig. 332). During the rain season the floods extend far and wide over the lower-lying flats, which for miles are covered only with long grass or are, at most, very thinly wooded. When the waters dry up, the intense heat cracks and furrows the black soil, forming, as it were, waves of hard earth over which horses stumble wearily along, and buckboards jolt and bump incessantly. For the first time we met with the gutta-percha or india-rubber tree,[1] a rather small tree with a sharp angular growth of branches, to which the small thick leaves adhere closely (Fig. 333). When the bark is cut it exudes a thick, whitish fluid which soon sets like gutta-percha. Both natives and white men are careful how they

[1] *Excœcaria sp.*

handle the juice, because, if it comes in contact with the soft membrane of the eye, it sets up severe inflammation which may even result in temporary blindness; hence the popular name for the tree, in some parts, of "Blind-your-eye." We soon got to dislike it because it grows on "Bay of Biscay" country and is a sure sign of uncomfortable travelling. On the other hand, we were always glad to see the "hedge-wood," [1] a tree with perhaps ten or fifteen long branches rising and spreading out from an underground bole. Its leaves are small and prickly, and though, when growing close together, the "hedge-woods" form a dense scrub, yet they are always a sign of better country, where travelling is comparatively light and easy.

The scrub soon hid the telegraph line from view, and we rode along in the heat until, towards sunset, we came to a broad creek bed, really part of the Newcastle, which was only distinguishable from the rest of the country because there were fewer trees growing on it than elsewhere, and also because the ground had a coating of silt and was scarred with deeper cracks than usual. Following this up across a flat we came upon a waterhole —its contents milky-white as usual—and camped by its side. We carefully cleared a patch around our camp so as to make us secure in case of fire, and utilising the long grass-stalks as a mattress, lay down to sleep, lulled by the buzzing of countless mosquitoes. At 9 p.m. the thermometer registered 85°F., and at sunrise next morning 76·5°. Travelling on we found we had been camping within a mile or two of a station dignified with the name of Betaloo Downs and situated by the side of an extensive sheet of milk-like water, called Bates' Lagoon—one of a series of three fine waterholes in the bed of the Newcastle. The country out to the east was low-lying, but on the

[1] *Macropteranthes Kekwickii.*



Fig. 334. BETALOO DOWNS STATION, FRONT VIEW.
Bates' Lagoon is seen in the background.



Fig. 335. BETALOO DOWNS STATION, BACK VIEW.

west there were slight rises, only a few yards high but still elevated enough to be of service in flood time. At first we looked in vain for the station, misled by the dignified title given to it, but on coming near to the water's edge we discovered a tent-fly and a small bush wurley, and were cordially welcomed to Betaloo Downs by one of its proprietors. The station was certainly primitive and well adapted to the open-air life, and we spent three very pleasant days camped close by (Figs. 334, 335). There was, fortunately, a slight rise only one or two hundred yards away, on to which the station and everything belonging to it could rapidly be removed in the event of a flood. We had ridden on from the telegraph line, leaving Chance with the wagon to follow more slowly, and as it was the first time that we had come across any genuine "Bay of Biscay" country, we were anxious to know what Chance thought of it and how the wagon and its contents had stood the jolting. When at last he team came in, Chance declined to say anything—he had absolutely nothing left to say. We set to work to unload and then to repair and repack the wagon, lightening the load as much as we could.

Close to the station there was a native camp, and we were not a little surprised to find that the natives knew all about us and were actually expecting us. We found out afterwards that the Tjingilli men, without saying anything to us, had sent messengers on ahead to tell these natives that we were coming and that we were friends. We were now on the fringe of the country occupied by the Umbaia tribe, and were glad to have the chance of learning something about them. They are usually called Wombaia or Wumbaia by the white men, but this is not the correct name. A blackfellow is so willing to fall in with what he fancies to be the wish of a white man, that if, for

example, the latter calls him Wombaia, instead of Umbaia, he will cheerfully agree to the change in order, as he thinks, to please the white man. Thus mistakes arise and are perpetuated. It is not unknown for even the natives themselves to adopt an incorrect pronunciation suggested in the first instance by a white man.

The Umbaia have just the same beliefs in regard to totemic ancestors as the Warramunga, and very much the same kind of traditions associated with them. The three large waterholes at Betaloo Downs were made, respectively, by a green snake, a water snake, and a fresh-water mussel. Each of these ancestors left spirit children behind them, and it is they who now come to life in the form of men and women.

They call their sacred ceremonies Arrambatja, and though, so far as their significance and the decorations of the performers were concerned, they were practically identical with those of the Tjingilli and the Warramunga, they differed in detail in regard to the actual performance. This is true of the various tribes, and without previously knowing whether any particular ceremony that you chanced to be watching belonged to the Arunta, Kaitish, Warramunga, Tjingilli, or Umbaia tribe, the method of performance would reveal the fact at once. We went on to their ceremonial ground, which was some distance away from the main camp, just over the brow of a slight rise, so that the performers, although the scrub was thin, could not be seen by the women and children in the main camp. The ceremonies were connected with two lizard totems, a fly, a wallaby, a little bird and a snake totem. A space, measuring about thirty feet in length by five or six in width, was cleared of grass and débris so as to form a definite ceremonial ground such as we had not seen in other tribes. At one end of this the performers



Fig. 336. PERFORMERS ON THE CEREMONIAL GROUND. CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE FLY, LIZARD, AND WALLABY TOTEMS, UMBAIA TRIBE.



Fig. 337. PERFORMER PROJECTING THE STONE CALLED ANJULUKULI IN THE UMBAIA TRIBE.

squatted on their haunches in single file. The audience arranged itself in two lines, one on either side of the cleared space, with a few men, including two visitors from the Gnanji tribe, seated on the ground immediately behind the performers (Fig. 336). The front man carried a curious oval red-ochred stone which he held in both hands. It is called Anjulukuli, but what its significance is the natives have no idea. All they know is that a stone like this always has been, and always must be used, and it forms an essential part of the paraphernalia of the ceremonies. When all was ready, the audience began to clang their boomerangs, and the first man, rising to his feet, ran along to the end of the cleared space with the usual high knee-action, turning his body from side to side as he pushed the stone out at arm's length (Fig. 337). The action was continued for a little time, the performer turning his body first in one direction and then in the other. After this he ran back in the same way until he reached the performers, when he squatted down in front of the leading man, placed the stone in his hands, and then joined the audience behind the performers. Exactly the same thing was repeated in the case of every man, and during the performance of one of the lizard ceremonies, two of the audience retired to one side and wailed aloud—just as the man had done during the Tjingilli ceremony and for the same reason. There was another curious little ceremony unlike anything that we had seen before. In a performance connected with a snake totem, a slab, decorated with spots of down enclosing a central sinuous line, was worn on the head of one of the performers, as can be seen in the illustration (Fig. 336). When the performance was over, it was taken from the man's head and broken by bending it over the back of another man. This was done to prevent it from ever

being used again, and we secured it as a memento of the ceremony.

From Betaloo Downs our course lay generally towards the north-east. We took on with us an extra black boy, in the person of a Gnanji native, in order to show us the waterholes. The first one lay to the south of the main route, so Chance and the wagon camped some miles away, while we went on to the water, spent the night there and brought the horses out in the morning—or rather the boy did, because you depend entirely upon your boys for this kind of assistance. The summer was coming on—that afternoon it was 103·5° F. in the shade of our bush mia-mia—and the waterhole was very nearly dry. The country all round had been fired and looked as desolate as possible, so we were glad to be up early, at 4 a.m., and rode straight across very rough "Bay of Biscay" country until we came to where Chance was camped with the wagon and our two other boys. Early in the afternoon we reached a waterhole called Munda, where we intended to spell for a day, as in this country and at this time of the year horses have to be very carefully considered. We were still in the drainage area supplied by streams from the Ashburton Range. The water was quite milky, but fortunately there was plenty of it. Three sides of the pool were surrounded by swamp, covered with a wiry Lignum shrub (Fig. 338) with a peculiar bluish tinge, growing in great bushes. We sat down quietly, watching the birds at work. About a dozen kites were flying around, swooping down every now and then on smaller birds such as wrens and finches. Flocks of sulphur-crested cockatoos and white galahs, with their beautiful pink crests and grey bodies, were screaming around, a few great black cockatoos adding their harsh notes to swell the noise. Little grass-green

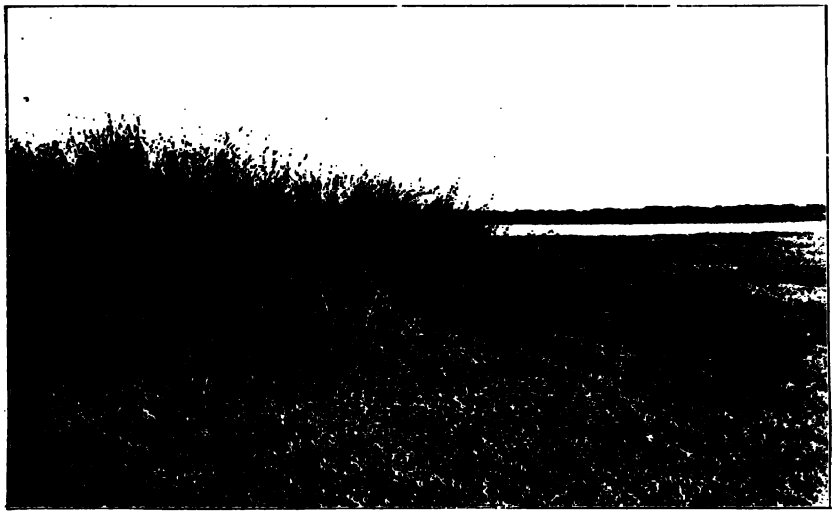


Fig. 338. LIGNUM SWAMP.



Fig. 339. SIDE VIEW OF A MAN OF THE GNANJI TRIBE, SHOWING THE METHOD OF PLAITING THE HAIR (p. 468).

parakeets were flying about in hundreds, and round the water's edge white ibis, cranes and spoonbills were solemnly stalking about, digging down every now and then into the mud in search of shells. One solitary old pelican came and settled down in the middle of the pool, but kept aloof from the other birds, quietly fishing on his own account. All along the line we had seen and heard little flocks of babblers[1] or, as the natives call them, in imitation of their cry, Tjuokitja. There would often be a dozen or more of them on one tree, dancing and chatting away amongst the boughs. A little to the north of Powell Creek we saw the last of them, and their place was taken by troops of cat birds,[2] which were quite as noisy and restless. In general build they are much like a small crow, but with a soft grey plumage and only the tail black. They are nearly allied to the bower-bird, only, instead of making a bower and playing on the ground, they dance up and down on the trees, uttering without ceasing their harsh call of "qua-a-ak, qua-a-ak." We even heard them calling in the middle of the night. The most interesting time around these waterholes, however, is just about sunset, when flocks of pigeons glide down to the water, and the trees are alive with all kinds of cockatoos that rise and circle round in great flocks, forming clouds of lovely colour.

Still travelling on to the north-east we came to a small and rapidly drying-up lagoon called Uranwinmi, where the birds were even more numerous than at Munda, and where also the water was clear, as we had passed away from the influence of the shale formation underlying the Ashburton Range. The next day we had just settled down, shortly after midday, and were enjoying our quart

[1] *Pomatostomus rubeculus.*
[2] *Struthidea cinerea.*

pots of tea, when two natives, clothed only in smiles, came out of the bush. One of them could speak a little broken English, and he told us that there was a better waterhole a little further on, so we saddled up again and were soon in camp under a shady gum tree on a well-grassed flat by the side of a sheet of clear water flecked with little yellow lilies. The name of the place was Karrabobba, which, when pronounced as the natives pronounce it, is so closely similar to the rather mournful note of the "peaceful dove"—one of the sounds most frequently heard in the bush—as to suggest that this is its origin.

The scrub round the waterhole was thick, and we found that a considerable number of members of the Gnanji tribe were camped close by, though we should have had no idea of their presence unless they had made themselves known to us. Like the Umbaia people, they were perfectly friendly, and during the afternoon they invited us to witness one of their sacred ceremonies, which they had gathered together to perform. These Gnanji people occupy the country lying between that of the Umbaia on the west and the coastal tribes on the east. They have a very bad repute, and certainly the mob we saw contained about the most villainous, evil-looking natives that could be imagined. A few years ago they speared a white man, ate his flesh, and then carefully collected his bones together and left them in a heap, by the side of a track where it was likely that they would be seen by those who went out in search of the murderers. We noticed that there were two or three in the mob who carefully disappeared out of sight whenever we came near. However, the others were perfectly friendly, and helped us to see and find out as much as we could in the limited time at our disposal.

One of the most striking features in this part of the country—and, indeed, right away north throughout wide stretches of the Northern Territory—is the enormous number and size of the white-ant hills. There are different kinds of these, varying in height from a foot or two to as much as twenty feet. They vary not only in size but in shape. Some are simply flat slabs—those made by the so-called meridian ant; others are constructed of a number of spherical masses, looking like bubbles of earth; others are bluntly rounded; but the great majority are conical. Amongst the latter we can distinguish those in which the nest consists of a single conical mass, and others in which a large number of cones are combined to form a gigantic ant hill. Another very striking feature of the ant hills is their variation in colour, which, of course, depends on the nature of the soil and that again on the rock formation out of which the surface of the country is formed. In some parts they are dark brown or almost black, in others they are red and in others yellow.

You never by any chance see a white ant in the open, because it is a most helpless insect, and everywhere and always it works in the dark. It has one curious habit which, when once the pest is seriously tackled, will be of great service in dealing with it, and that is its eating and re-eating everything, including the bodies of its dead comrades. It not only eats wood or almost anything else with which it comes into contact, but when once anything has passed through its body, the refuse material thrown out is eaten again and again until there is not a particle of nutriment left. This voracious insect may be taken advantage of, because any poisoned ant is immediately eaten by its fellows, who when they die are eaten by others, and so on with far-spreading results.

Not only this, but the opening up of the ground seems to be injurious to the insect, which has a decided objection to being disturbed. It is certainly a great pest, and scarcely anything is proof against its attacks.

The natives in these parts have no lack of food supply —both animal and vegetable. The waterholes are full of fish, which are caught in one of two ways. The first is by means of a small hand net about two feet square with a wooden rod running along each of two sides. The rods are held in the hands and the net is used as a scoop. The second method is decidedly ingenious, but only serves for the capture of comparatively small fish. A hollow log from six inches to a foot in diameter, and four or five feet long, is laid on the bottom of the water-pool and allowed to remain quietly there for a day or two. The native, with a bunch of grass stalks in each hand, walks quietly into the water and suddenly closes up each end with the grass, lifts the log up, brings it on to the bank and empties out its contents, which usually include a number of small fish. Mussels they get in plenty by feeling for them with their toes, and turtles are easily captured. At Karrabobba we offered a stick of tobacco for a turtle, and within five minutes a native brought one out of the water. It was a fine specimen of the long-necked variety (*Chelodina longicollis*), which is widely spread over Australia. In many parts of the Territory this species lives in waterholes which are dried up during the winter months. As soon as the water begins to disappear the turtles burrow down into the mud, which hardens around them, and there they remain until the rain season returns and releases them from their prisons.

One of the choicest foods of the blackfellows is what they call "sugar bag"; that is, the honeycomb of the native bee. This little insect is only about an eighth of

an inch long, and when looked at casually is much more like a small fly than a bee. However, the presence of two pairs of well-developed wings at once shows that it is not a fly. It nests in hollow limbs of different kinds of trees—gums, lancewoods, etc.—the white ants providing it with plenty of opportunity for building its hives. When taking a spell at any place, such as Karrabobba, we often used to go on wandering in the bush with one or two natives, and they were always on the look-out for opossums and "sugar bags." Every other gum tree would have one or two hollow boughs—the possible resting place of an opossum—and the quick eye of the native at once detected any scratching on the trunk, indicating that an opossum had climbed up or down. The look of the scratch told him also whether it had been made recently or was an old mark. If the signs were satisfactory the method adopted to dislodge the animal, which is nocturnal in its habits, was both simple and ingenious. A small hole was made low down on the hollow trunk, dry grass was put in and lighted, and fuel added until there was a continuous stream of thick smoke coming out of every hole in the bough. The treatment was continued until the animal, if present, was driven out, in which case it had no resource but to jump to the ground, where it was quickly captured. If no animal appeared after a thorough smoking, then the natives concluded, and probably quite correctly, that it was "not at home." The whereabouts of "sugar bags" is determined by placing the ear against likely-looking trunks or boughs, when the low hum of the bees at work inside can be heard, or sometimes by actually watching a bee entering a small hole in the bough. During the rain season and in very cold weather the natives say that the bees close the entrance to the nest with mud. If,

as sometimes happens, the nest is attacked by predatory ants a number of bees block the opening with their own bodies. When once the "sugar bag" has been located, it is then chopped out. The comb is quite irregular in shape, varying in quantity of course in different hives. The cells are like little round balls, the largest about a quarter of an inch in diameter, some of them containing honey, and some pollen and sticky stuff not yet made into honey. The third kind is much smaller and contains the eggs, larvæ and pupæ. The whole mass, except the smaller cells, though of course many of them are included accidentally, is scooped into a piece of bark. Hundreds of bees get mixed up with the honey and the pollen, but the natives do not mind this and eat the whole of it with relish. So far as the honey itself is concerned it is excellent.

Our next camping ground was by the side of a lagoon, half a mile long, called Whanaluru. Its surface was covered with the broad, green leaves and lovely blue flowers of a water lily (Fig. 340). On the leaves, little long-legged black and white mud larks were hopping about searching for food; in the lanes of water ducks were swimming, and in the centre of the lagoon a few stately pelicans were floating, holding themselves, as usual, quite aloof from other birds. While we were busy in camp our boys went out and brought in a supply of ducks and pigeons and also two pelicans. The latter are unpleasantly fishy in their flavour, so we generously gave them to the Gnanji men who had followed us up from Karrabobba, at the same time telling them to camp on the other side of the lagoon, as they looked more picturesque in the distance. These Gnanji men have a curious habit of treating their hair which was quite unlike anything that we had seen before (Fig. 339). They



Fig. 340. LILY POOL, WHANALURU.

allow it to grow to a considerable length and tie it tightly in plaits, with the result that, when these are undone, it sticks out in a kind of frizzy mop, something like that of a New Guinea man, only on a smaller scale. The first Gnanji man that we saw, when we met him at Bates' Lagoon, had his hair in plaits: a few days later, at Karrabobba, he had undone the plaits and we did not recognise him.

The lily pools are favourite camping grounds of the natives, because not only can they secure game but the lily itself forms one of their chief vegetable foods. They eat both the leaf stalks and the roots, the former raw and the latter cooked. The seeds are also gathered by the women in large quantities, and, after being ground between stones, are made into flat cakes or dampers. If necessity arises a native finds a safe hiding-place amongst the lilies. They usually grow very closely together, and the native conceals himself amongst them with the whole of his body immersed in the water, above the surface of which he projects his mouth and nose, every now and then, to breathe—but so carefully that he does not even raise a ripple and it requires a very trained eye to detect him.

Towards evening we were surprised to see two strange natives coming into our camp, one of them carrying what they call a "paper yabber." It turned out that our friend Mr. Kell had very kindly sent out after us some messages which had come along the line for us after our departure from Powell Creek. The two men had followed us up for just one hundred and ninety miles, carrying the "paper yabber" in a cleft stick. Though they had come through strange tribes, first the Umbaia and then the Gnanji, yet so long as they carried this emblem of the fact that they were messengers, they were perfectly safe. The natives are quite accustomed to

messengers travelling from tribe to tribe to summon distant groups to take part in sacred ceremonies. Such messengers always carry a token of some kind—very often a sacred stick or bull-roarer. Their persons are always safe, and so the same safety is granted to natives carrying "paper yabbers" for the white man. These two men had travelled ninety miles in these last three days so as to try to overtake us. They were perfectly happy when they reached us, the sense of having been successful in their work being apparently quite sufficient to satisfy them—with, of course, in addition, a plenteous supply of food and tobacco when they reached us. They spent the night in camp and left us next morning with a good stack of flour, meat and tobacco, and a pipe and knife for each of them, quite cheerful at the prospect of a return journey of nearly two hundred miles to their own camp at Powell Creek. Their only luggage, apart from food, was a spear and a spear-thrower.

These "paper yabbers" are a mystery to the unsophisticated native. On one occasion a friend of ours sent a native with a small parcel of tobacco to a camp some distance away. At the same time he sent a note saying how many sticks the parcel contained. As a general rule a package such as this would be delivered intact, but the native knew what it contained and the temptation to open it and abstract a few sticks was too strong. When, on his arrival, he was taxed with the theft, he was highly indignant with the "paper yabber," because he had hidden it away in a hollow tree trunk while he opened the parcel, in order that it could not possibly see what he was doing, and he thought that it had, in some unfair way, found out what he had done and told the white man.

We had ridden on beyond Whanaluru for an hour

or two, when the country began to fall away to the eastwards, showing that we had crossed the divide between the Central and the coastal districts. The scrub, however, was too thick to enable us to see any distance, and we went on for a day or two without seeing anything of special interest. The weather was getting warmer and warmer, and each day heavy banks of clouds rolled across the sky, and away in the distance we could hear the thunder. We had been looking forward to reaching a water-pool called Pinda, because we had heard that there were plenty of small crocodiles there, and we camped close to it full of expectations. We were, however, doomed to disappointment; once or twice we saw two little eyes projecting above the water, but the animals were too wary to be caught. There was said to be one of the larger crocodiles also in this pool, but we saw no trace of it. The larger kind is commonly called "alligator," which is rather unfortunate, because a crocodile is quite distinct from an alligator, and there is no such thing as an alligator in Australia. Also this particular species is identical with the large crocodile which is correctly called by this name in other parts, such as the Malay Peninsula and India. In a crocodile the large fourth tooth in each lower jaw slides into a groove on the outer side of the upper jaw, so that it can be seen from the outside when the mouth is closed. In an alligator the same tooth fits into a hollow in the upper jaw, so that it cannot be seen from the outside when the mouth is closed. You can tell a crocodile's skull at a glance by the very distinct nick on each side of the upper jaw.

While camped at Pinda we had a little bit of experience very characteristic of the "never-never" country. Our stock of dried beef was running short and

we were still more than a hundred miles away from Borroloola. We knew also that there was a solitary white man living on an outlying cattle-run some thirty miles away from Pinda, so we sent him a "paper yabber" by a black boy asking him if he could let us have some beef to carry on with us. He not only did so, but without thinking anything about it, "packed" it in for thirty miles to us on horseback. After a mid-day meal with us he rode back to his camp just as if it were an ordinary part of the day's work. His next-door neighbour, on one side, lived one hundred miles and, on the other, one hundred and thirty miles away.

We were now near the head waters of the Leila Creek, just where it descends from the edge of the tableland to the coastal district. None of this country has been mapped, except in the vaguest way, but apparently the tableland is bordered by a slight escarpment which has been cut into by different streams so as to form valleys through which the former descend. We came down one of these valleys. It was decidedly rough, and we were thankful when Chance and the wagon came safely into our camp on the Leila.

On these hot days we always started very early in the morning so as to be in camp by noon and thus avoid the greatest, or at least the most trying heat of the day, which comes between noon and three or four o'clock. As soon as ever we got into camp our boy always made us a bough wurley so that we could be in the shade. On this occasion we were skinning birds, though it was decidedly hot—115° F. in the coolest shade we could find. Ominous banks of clouds had been rolling up, but we had got so accustomed to them and to their passing harmlessly away, that we paid no attention to them. Fortunately, however, we had taken the precaution to fasten a tent-fly over the

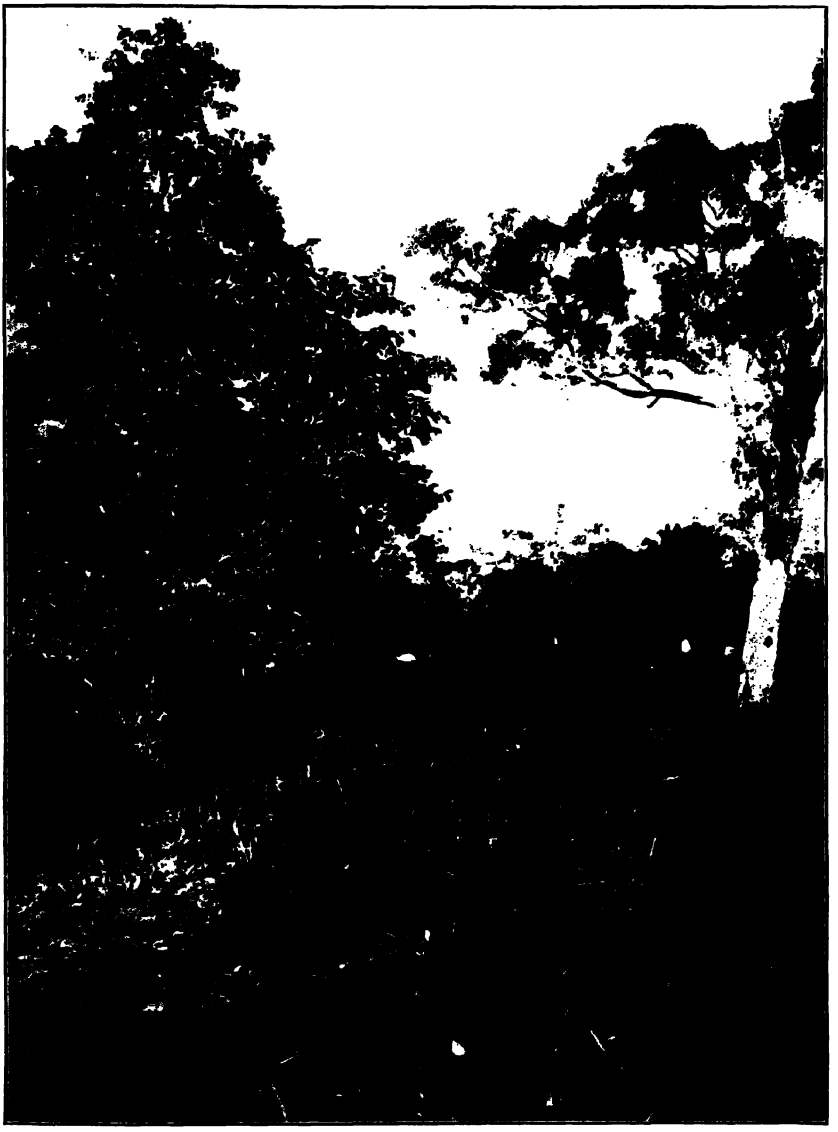


Fig. 341. LEICHARDT PINE (p. 474).

wagon and had erected another, tied to pegs in the ground, over our bunks and personal belongings. Without any warning a few heavy drops fell, and then, before we knew what was happening, a roaring wind swept up the valley. We had just time to seize a few things out of the wurley and escape from it before the wind scattered the whole thing. Table, camp-stools, knives, forks, plates, collecting materials, birds, skins and branches were sent whirling away. We rushed for the tent-fly. The trees bent and groaned as the wind swept by, and down came the rain in a perfect deluge. There were six of us, three white men and three black boys, and we all hung on to the tent-fly while the water streamed over us. The canvas flapped and flapped, and the peg ropes snapped. The thunder was deafening and the lightning flashed incessantly. If there had been any one to watch us we must have presented a very comical appearance, absolutely drenched to the skin and every now and then lifted off our feet by a terrific gust of wind. However, our combined weight and efforts kept the tent from flying away into space, and in less than half-an-hour everything was over, though we could hear the thunder rolling away in the distance. When the storm had passed by we set to work to collect our scattered belongings, which were distributed over a considerable area. The flies came in myriads as soon as the rain ceased, and we were glad of the comparative cool of the night, when they disappeared, and when, fortunately, very few mosquitoes came about, so that we had a few hours' quiet rest.

We travelled on until we struck the Macarthur River on its northern bank. The bed was about a hundred yards broad, full of rocks and sand, and bordered by beautiful trees. We soon reached the station, where we were received most kindly by Mr. Amos, one of the owners,

who was then managing the station. We enjoyed a most welcome rest on the verandah and then went down to the native camp, occupied by natives of the Binbinga Tribe. It was placed in a very picturesque spot close by the river-side, amongst shady fig trees, paperbarks, Leichardt pines (Fig. 341), and screw pines (Fig. 343). The water looked deep and clear and very inviting for a bathe, but there were too many crocodiles about to make this safe.

Right in the very middle of the camp there was a curious erection which attracted our attention at once. It consisted of a forked stick about five feet high, with a large parcel fixed in the fork wrapped up in paperbark and tied round with human hair string, sheets of paper-bark being placed above it to protect it from the weather (Fig. 342). The ground had been cleared of weeds and smoothed down round the fork; and a horse-shoe-shaped ring of sand, two or three inches high, enclosed a space about six feet in longest diameter, from the centre of which the fork arose. A small fire smouldered on the sand inside the horse-shoe. It was right in the middle of all the mia-mias, and was under the charge of an ancient, evil-looking native whose duty it was, in common with a still more ancient-looking lubra, to see that the fire never went out day or night. We learned that the parcel contained the bones of a dead man and was there awaiting the final burial ceremony, and we set to work to devise some scheme of enticing the old man to part with them, or at least with some of them. As a preliminary we made friends with him and secured three of the arm bones, which, as usual, had been kept separate and painted with pipe-clay. Each of them was wrapped in paperbark, and they were ready to be used as pointing bones to kill other natives. We wandered about the camp, and before leaving told him that if he wanted to sell the whole or part of his



Fig. 342. PARCEL OF DEAD MAN'S BONES WRAPPED IN PAPER-BARK AND PLACED IN THE FORK OF A BRANCH STANDING UPRIGHT IN THE GROUND.

Around the base is a horse-shoe shaped ridge of sand within which a small fire is kept burning. The photograph is taken from a case in the National Museum, Melbourne. The scene is an exact reproduction of the original one. The parcel of bones was obtained from the Binbinga tribe, where it was found in the middle of a camp on the banks of the Macarthur River. In the same case are seen three log coffins decorated with totemic designs, the one on the right belonging to the dugong totem.

relative's remains we would buy them with flour, tobacco, and a tomahawk, but received no satisfactory reply. At a later date we learned a good deal more about the death and burial customs of the Binbinga and other tribes around the western shores of the Gulf. When any one dies, provided he or she be not too old, certain of the male relatives take the body out into the bush and cook it in a native oven. That is, a hole dug in the ground and a fire lighted in it and stones heated on which sheets of paperbark are laid. Then comes the body, then another layer of paperbark and the earth is piled in. The lubras are not allowed to see the actual cooking, but certain of them are in the scrub close by, and when all is ready are summoned to take part in the gruesome meal, though as far as we could judge neither the men nor the women regarded it in this light. When all the flesh has been removed—apparently everything is eaten—the bones are collected and, with the exception of the long ones from the arms, are wrapped in paperbark and handed over to the custody of a relative, who watches over them as we saw this one doing in the Binbinga camp. The spirit is supposed to hover about the bones; this is why, in the first place, a fire is always kept burning so that the spirit may warm itself, and, secondly, why an opening is left in the sand ridge to allow the spirit to get to the fire with ease. After about a year the bones are placed in a coffin made from the boughs of a gum tree which has been hollowed out by white ants. The two ends are stuffed with paperbark and the surface decorated with designs indicating the totem of the dead person. The men, meanwhile, have gone to a special camp, and here the coffin, called Lurkun, is set upright at one end of the ground.

Stores of food, damper made from lily seeds, lily roots and "sugar bag" have been brought on to the ground,

and all night long they sing and perform corrobborees referring to the dead man's totem. At daybreak they form into a group with a special relative in the middle, in charge of the Lurkun. One man goes on ahead carrying bushes which he beats together. As they walk quickly along they all shout, "Oh! Oh! Sh! Sh! Wrr! Wrr!" and, doing this, march to a spot where the lubras are camped in the scrub. The camp has a raised margin with one opening leading into it, and through this the men pass in single file, the man carrying the Lurkun in the lead. He deposits it in a small hole, which has been made by the women, who are standing to one side, and the procession then turns and passes out, taking with it sundry dampers that the women have cooked. The men sit down about fifty yards away and eat them, while the women come up, wail and howl, cut themselves with bone knives, and then retire to their own camp. When they have gone, the leader takes the Lurkun away and deposits it, sometimes in a tree overhanging a waterhole, or, at others, in a cleft amongst the rocks on a hill-side.

We said nothing further to the old man and had given up all hope of getting any of the bones, when, just as we were starting away in the early morning, he came quietly into our camp, carrying a parcel of bones wrapped up in paperbark. Evidently the thought of the tobacco and tomahawk had been too much for him. He asked us to be sure and hide them away so that they could not be seen, and was very anxious that we should not let any one know that he had given them to us. He must have extracted them under cover of darkness. However, we paid him well, and he seemed quite contented and evidently suffered from no qualms of conscience.

During the next two days we travelled on, for the most part, across the broad Macarthur flats. We had



Fig. 343. SCREW PINES (PANDANUS).



Fig. 344. POLICE QUARTERS, BORROLOOLA.

pictured the Gulf country as being more or less tropical, but the nearer we came to the sea the less tropical it was; and now, within a few miles of Borroloola, we found ourselves in an open plain with little to see save cracked earth, coarse grass, gum trees and grasshoppers innumerable. The latter were flying about in clouds, and had eaten all the leaves off the trees, making everything look as desolate as possible. After a time there were only scattered gums, and then across the plains, covered with yellow grass-stalks, we could see a dark belt of trees bordering the river. As we came still nearer we saw the tops of three corrugated iron houses, indicating the position of Borroloola (Fig. 344). They belonged to the store, the hotel and the court house, close to which were the police quarters under charge of Mounted Trooper Stott, who at once offered us the use of the court house as a camping ground—an offer that we gratefully accepted. This was our seventieth and last camp in our traverse of the continent from Oodnadatta in the south to the Gulf of Carpentaria in the north.

CHAPTER XXII

BORROLOOLA AND THE COASTAL TRIBES

YEARS ago Borroloola was a much more populous place than it now is, and the Macarthur district, until the police were permanently settled there, had a most unenviable notoriety as the home, or rather the hiding-place, of some of the worst characters in the Territory, men for whom other parts had become too hot. Those old days have long since passed away, and when we saw it, Borroloola was simply a little township, the white inhabitants consisting of the manager of the store, the Mounted Trooper, the hotel keeper, and the owner of what had once been a fine Chinese fruit and vegetable garden. Three times a year a small steamer from Darwin was supposed to call, bringing stores, but at the time of our visit it had foundered, and means of communication by sea were precarious. However, we had plenty of work ahead of us amongst the coastal tribes and we settled down comfortably, and rigged our bunks under the shelter of the court house, which was now empty and deserted save for a few bats.

Two days after we arrived, Chance, who had been delayed by the breaking of a couple of bolts while descending the very steep bank of the gully leading down

into the bed of the Macarthur, came in with the wagon. We had had the best of good fortune, right through, and it was a great relief to us to have got the wagon and everything safely across the continent, without even the loss of a horse. That we had been able to do so was due to the good management of Chance and the willing service of our two black boys, Purunda and Erlikiliaka, who had come through with us from Charlotte Waters.

There were two main native camps in the neighbourhood of Borroloola. One was occupied chiefly by the Binbinga, and the other, and larger one, by men of the Anula and Mara tribes—principally the former. The Binbinga occupy the Macarthur country from the coastal ranges down to Borroloola. From here to the coast is the country of the Anula; and away to the north, in the coastal district from the Limmen to the Roper River, live the Mara.

In regard to its organisation and classificatory system, the Binbinga people belong to the same large group as the Warramunga and other inland tribes, and we had comparatively little difficulty in working amongst them. When we came to the Anula and Mara, however, we found ourselves in difficulties. We spent day after day trying to get at the bottom of their organisation, and at last succeeded in doing so. It looks quite simple in tabular form, but it is by no means a simple thing to find out. The following table will serve to show, as clearly as possible, the main features in regard to the classificatory systems of the Urabunna, Arunta, and Mara tribes respectively. Column one gives the class or sub-class of the father; column two, that of the mother; and column three, that of the children. *A* indicates one moiety of the tribe, *B* the other.

URABUNNA.

	1.	2.	3.
A.	Kirarawa	Matthurie	Matthurie.
B.	Matthurie	Kirarawa	Kirarawa.

ARUNTA.

	1.	2.	3.
A.	Panunga	Purula	Bulthara.
	Bulthara	Kumara	Panunga.
B.	Purula	Panunga	Kumara.
	Kumara	Bulthara	Purula.

MARA.

A.	Murungun	Purdal	Murungun.
	Murungun	Kuial	Murungun.
	Mumbali	Kuial	Mumbali.
	Mumbali	Purdal	Mumbali.
B.	Purdal	Murungun	Purdal.
	Purdal	Mumbali	Purdal.
	Kuial	Mumbali	Kuial.
	Kuial	Murungun	Kuial.

It will be seen that in the Urabunna tribe descent is counted in the direct female line; in the Arunta in what is called the indirect male line—that is, the child goes into the father's side of the tribe, but into the half of it to which he does not belong; and in the Mara the descent is in the direct male line. The feature in the Mara tribe which puzzled us most was that a Morungun man, for example, married either a Kuial or a Purdal woman, which was of course quite distinct from the Arunta system or that of any other tribe we had hitherto met with. It was only after very careful investigation and a comparison of the Mara system with that of the Binbinga, which agrees fundamentally with the Arunta, that we were able to find out what special Morungun men married Purdal or Kuial women, as the case might be, and so on with the other sub-classes. There are two groups, for example, of Murungun men and two of Purdal women, and a man of one Murungun group only marries a woman of one Purdal group; the other



Fig. 345. MEDICINE MAN, BINBINGA TRIBE, CARRYING A WALLET ON HIS BACK. SHOWING METHOD OF PLAITING HAIR. SIDE FACE.



Fig. 346. KARAWA BOY, SHOWING METHOD OF PLAITING HAIR.

Murungun man must marry into one group of Kuial women.

If any one wishes a lesson in patience, we can strongly recommend an investigation into the classificatory system of some more or less highly specialised tribe like the Mara or Anula.

Of the two main camping grounds near to Borroloola, one was situated close to the river, where the "salt water" natives, as they are called—that is, the Anula and the Mara, together with a few visitors from the Karawa tribe—built their mia-mias, and the other further inland, where the Binbinga camped. The members of the two camps did not appear to have very much to do with one another, though they seemed to be on quite friendly terms when they met.

We worked, at first, amongst the Binbinga people, because we had already come into contact with them on our way down the Macarthur river. We learned a good deal from an old medicine man named Kurkutji, and found out that in most essential features the Binbinga beliefs were closely similar to those of the Central tribes. They had just the same tradition with regard to their old ancestors walking about the country and leaving spirit children behind who are continually born again. The Macarthur valley, for example, with its river course and waterholes, was made by an old snake ancestor named Ulanji.

The old man Kurkutji was a good example of the Binbinga tribe. The men of the latter have very little hair on the face, and that on the head is allowed to grow to a considerable length and is then made into plaits which are wound round the crown so as to produce the appearance of a close-fitting cap or helmet (Figs. 345, 346). This old man told us how he had graduated in

his profession. One day he walked into a cave in a hill not far away from Borroloola, quite unaware that the two spirits called Mundadji and Munkaninji, who make medicine men, were walking about. Before he knew what was happening, old Mundadji caught him by the neck and killed him. Then he cut him open, right down the middle, took out all his insides and exchanged them for those of himself, which he placed in the body of Kurkutji. After this had been done, the younger spirit, Munkaninji, came up and restored him to life, told him that he was now a medicine man, and showed him how to take "poison bones" out of men. Then he took him up into the sky, and finally brought him down near his camp, where his people were mourning for him, thinking he was dead. For a long time he remained in a more or less dazed condition, but gradually he recovered and the natives knew that he had been made into a medicine man. He is in great demand, not only in his own tribe, but in the Anula also, who, curiously enough, only have medicine men who can implant, but cannot extract "poison bones."

We were much interested in the Anula, Mara, and Karawa tribes. They belong to a group of coastal tribes inhabiting the western shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria. For generations past they have been in contact with the Malays, who annually come down in their prahus to trade for tortoise-shell, pearls and trepang. So far as we could see, judging by the natives of the coastal tribes that we met, and there was a good number at Borroloola at various times, there has been but little mingling of the two races. One of the most characteristic features of the Malays is their lank, straight hair. All the coastal natives that we saw were, on the other hand, strongly characterised by the possession of very distinct curly, in fact sometimes decidedly frizzy, hair. This is well shown in

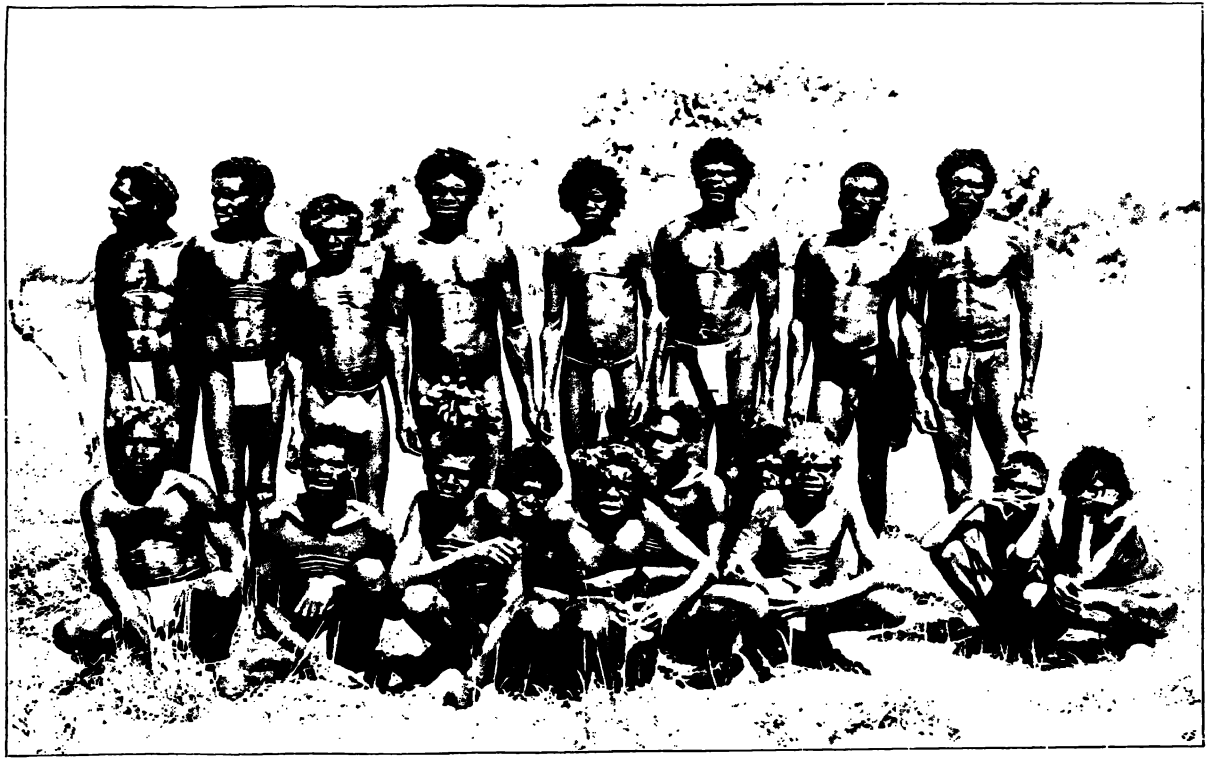


Fig. 347. GROUP OF ANULA AND MARA NATIVES.



Fig. 348. BARK CANOE. ANULA TRIBE.

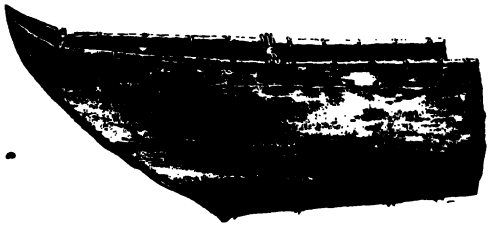


Fig. 349. BOW END OF CANOE.

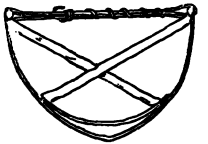


Fig. 350. CROSS SECTION OF CANOE.



Fig. 351. CANOE PADDLE.

the group photograph of some of the Anula and Mara men living in the camp at Borroloola (Fig. 347).

These coastal natives have two kinds of boats, one a "dug-out" and the other made of sheets of bark carefully sewn together. The former are not made by the natives, but are obtained by barter from the Malays. They may be twenty or more feet in length and three in beam, and are hollowed out of a single log. Their ends are slightly raised so as to form a definite stern and bow. The native-made boats are of very different form and much more fragile, though at the same time they are very serviceable. A large one such as that represented in Fig. 348 reaches a length of seventeen feet, is slightly more than two feet in beam and has both ends raised, the bow rather more than the stern. There is no attempt to form a keel. The bark is obtained from some species of gum tree, from which it easily peels off in broad strips. In this canoe there were seven pieces. One extended from bow to stern along one side, two pieces being sewn together to form the other side. The two sides of the boat thus formed are sewn together along the bow, stern, and keel-line. At each end, and on each side, a small strip is added to form the bow and stern. Along each bulwark, a thin, long branch of mango wood is tied securely to the bark. To prevent the sides from collapsing outwards there are nine "ties" of rope passing across from side to side, two of them serving to pinch in the extreme ends of the bow and stern (Fig. 349). To prevent the sides from collapsing inwards, three stout sticks are arranged at the level of each of the cross ties, one passing across from side to side immediately under the rope, the other two slanting down and crossing one another as shown in the section (Fig. 350). Pieces of bark are placed along the bottom

of the boat, partly to afford additional strength where the cross sticks press against the sides, and partly to afford a dry floor. There is no attempt at caulking, but the sewing along the keel-line is so efficient that very little water soaks through. The canoes are propelled by very crudely made paddles (Fig. 351). This particular one had been made by Anula men, and when we secured it, had just brought six men across from the Pellew Islands in the Gulf to the mouth of the Macarthur, and then up the river for fifty miles to Borroloola.

The twine used in the making of articles such as this boat is very simply made and often looks just as good, and is certainly quite as serviceable, as the white man's string or rope. Native twine can generally be detected because it is, almost without exception, two-ply. To speak more correctly, twine with more than two plies is not likely to be native Australian. It is made, in this part of the country, out of the inner bark of various trees, principally gums, or very often out of the leaves of the screw-pine, torn into shreds. The twine-maker rubs a few fibres or shreds with his right hand on his thigh (Fig. 352), continually serving fresh material with his left hand. This gives him a single thread, and two of these are twisted together in just the same way to make the two-ply string. It is astonishing how rapidly and easily an expert, such as the one represented in the illustration, will make great lengths of string, of varying thickness, according to purpose for which it is intended to be used.

We were, on the whole, very disappointed with the weapons and implements of these tribes. They use two types of spear-throwers. The commonest of them, which we had first seen in use amongst the Warramunga, though they are sometimes traded still



Fig. 352. YOUNG MAN MAKING TWINE OUT OF LONG SHREDS OF BARK. ANULA TRIBE.



Fig. 353. YOUNG MAN OF THE ANULA TRIBE WEARING CANE NECKLET.

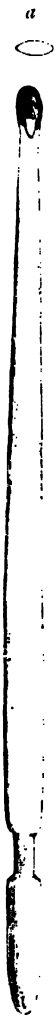


Fig. 354. SPEAR-THROWER, WARRAMUNGA AND NORTHERN TRIBES.



Fig. 355. DECORATED SPEAR-THROWER, WARRAMUNGA TRIBE.

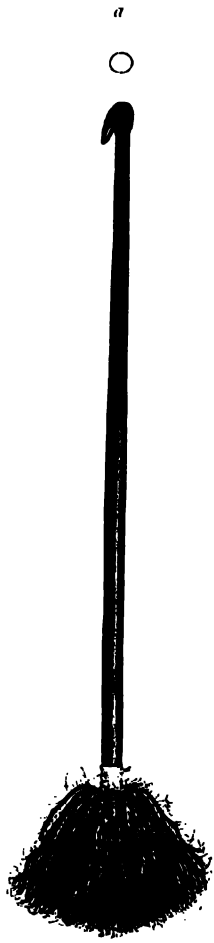


Fig. 356. TASSEL SPEAR-THROWER, ANULA TRIBE.

further south, has the form of a long, thin, flattened slab of wood with a very distinctly marked handle (Figs. 354, 355). The second, which is not so widely distributed, and is made especially by the Umbaia and Gnanji tribes, has the form of a stick, circular in section and almost three feet in length. The handle end is ornamented with a tassel of human hair string (Fig. 356). In both these types the knob, which fits into the slight hole in the end of the spear, is made of wood, and is attached to the thrower by means of porcupine-grass resin in the Warramunga and interior tribes, and beeswax in the coastal tribes. The latter method is really the better of the two, because, though the wax is rather soft, it never becomes brittle and liable to be as easily cracked and broken as the grass resin. There was only one kind of spear that we had not seen before. On one side of the terminal part (Fig. 360) a row of barbs was clearly indicated, but their points were not separated, so that, though there were a number of holes corresponding to the spaces between successive barbs, the edge was a continuous one, on both sides of the prong. It is, of course, quite possible that sooner or later the barbs may be separated, but spears of this kind are not infrequently seen. They are also characterised by a very long terminal point.

Stone spears are sometimes met with (Fig. 361), but blades of sheath iron and iron prongs are rapidly replacing both iron and wood, and are, as the natives very soon find out, much more effectual both for fighting and for spearing animals than any other form of spear-head.

Almost every native wears either an armlet or a necklet, and usually both, of plaited, split cane (Fig. 353). The arm bands are very characteristic of both men and women, and as many as twenty to thirty

may be worn on the one arm. So far as ornaments are concerned, the coastal natives seem to have much more eye for colour than the tribes of the interior. They will take a simple piece of split cane, bind it tightly round with fur string, and cover it thickly with the bright red, yellow, and green feathers of the Blue Mountain parakeet or the pink ones of the galah cockatoo. In the one illustrated (Fig. 357) there are two pendants of human hair string with little masses of beeswax, into which tufts of feathers of the blue coot are fixed. They also make really beautiful waist-girdles, in which the string is hidden from view by gaily-coloured feathers.

Head bands are very commonly worn. Each consists of a large number of strands of opossum-fur string tied together at either end. By means of moistened pipe-clay the strings can be made to form a flat band, on which designs can be painted in red and yellow ochre. The two specimens figured will serve to illustrate those which are worn by the coastal tribes. In the simpler one (Fig. 358) the strands, which are woven in such a way as to form the flat band-like surface, are knotted together at one side, and the two ends can be tied together by means of a string made of human hair. The broad part is ornamented with pipe-clay and with narrow bands of lighter and darker red ochre. A more complicated and interesting form is seen in Fig. 359. The strands are separated into two sets, and at each end these are bound round with fine string in such a way as to form two distinct loops, to each of which a string is attached for the purpose of tying the band on to the head. The most interesting feature consists of two small pendants terminating in what is evidently the imitation of a flower, the petals of which are made out of small brown feathers, cut into uniform shape, with a centre of down representing



Fig. 357. ARMLET DECORATED WITH COCKATOO FEATHER AND PENDANTS. MARA TRIBE.

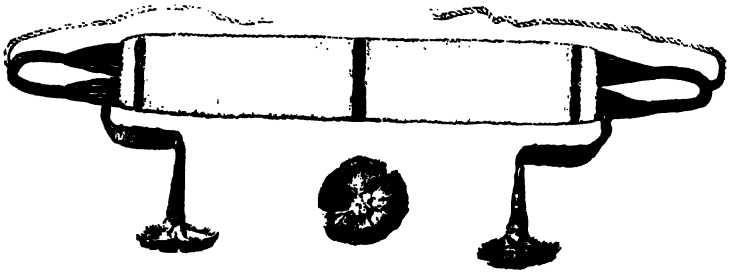


Fig. 359. MAN'S FOREHEAD-BAND WITH ATTACHED PENDANT IMITATING FLOWERS, MARA TRIBE.



Fig. 358. MAN'S FOREHEAD-BAND, ANULA TRIBE.

the stamens. It is only very rarely that an attempt is made to imitate any natural object such as a flower.

We were very anxious to secure one of the large crocodiles. You can see them along the banks of the river, but as soon as they are disturbed they glide rapidly down into the water and, even if shot, sink to the bottom at once. They are ugly brutes and very dangerous, and in the Anula camp there were two or three natives who were terribly scarred, as the result, so they said, of encounters with crocodiles. One of them had lost the greater part of the hip and thigh on one side. The crocodile lies in wait at some place where horses or cattle come down to drink and then, without any warning, an animal is suddenly seized and dragged down into the water. It likes its food to be a little "high," much as the white man likes his game, and, instead of eating the body at once, carries it away to some quiet "billabong," where it is allowed to mature for a few days. Both white men and natives fall victims now and then to the crocodiles. The natives say that if you can manage to poke your fingers into its eyes, you may so disconcert the beast that it lets go and you can escape. There is no doubt whatever that they do catch the smaller crocodile in this way, but it must require a good deal of coolness and self-possession to poke your fingers deliberately into the eyes of a twelve or fifteen-feet-long crocodile which has seized you by the arm or leg. The natives have one very quaint way of protecting themselves, which they told us about most naïvely, as if it were quite the natural thing to do. If a party of them has to cross a stream, in which crocodiles are lurking, they go in single file. They always put an old woman in the rear, because, so they believe, the crocodile always seizes upon the last person,

and the loss of an old woman does not matter very much.

Crocodiles are often caught by means of a poisoned bait, and one day the natives came to us in a state of great excitement saying that one had been secured. We gave them ropes, and in a short time saw a procession of twenty blackfellows coming along, carrying the beast slung on to a pole. He was decidedly dead, but, as it was the first crocodile we had been able to get, we set to work to skin him, and his odour remained with us for weeks. Several days later, when Chance and one of us were taking the skin out for an airing, its peculiar scent was so strong that it woke the other member of our party, who was enjoying an afternoon sleep some distance away. Unfortunately, though there was a building between them, the wind was blowing from the skin towards him. We had, finally, to abandon all thoughts of curing the skin and had to content ourselves with the head—the rest we burned.

The time of the north-west monsoon was drawing near and the weather was rapidly getting warmer and moister, making any physical exertion a trouble. Day after day the clouds gathered in great masses, but it was the middle of December before the wet season really set in, and even then we only had passing storms. One day was very much like another. Of course we had to sleep in mosquito-proof nets and there was no need for any save the lightest covering, because the lowest temperature at night, even in the open, was rarely under 75° F. Just about 5 o'clock every morning a faint light appeared in the east. Gradually it deepened into a warm orange, the foreglow, which again slowly faded away, giving place to a cold, grey light. Once more it warmed into yellow, the trees on the tops of the low hills were tinged with pink,

and in a few minutes everything was bathed in brilliant sunshine. Just when the first glow appeared the birds woke up, and the magpies, pigeons and kingfishers welcomed the returning light, while flocks of galahs and Blue Mountain parakeets came screeching to the water. After a little while all was quiet again. Not a breath of air stirred, and it felt as if everything was watching and waiting for the sun. All day long we perspired and waited patiently while the shadows of the houses and trees gradually drew in from the west, until at noon a straight-up post threw no shadow at all. Then, only too slowly, the shadows lengthened out towards the east, and we waited for the sunset and the lovely orange-coloured after-glow that always followed it, melting above into the turquoise green of the sky. The day of our first thunder-storm was very typical of the weather during this season of the year in the Gulf country. The thermometer registered 85° F. at sunrise ; at 9 a.m. it was 94° F. and then it steadily went up and from 1 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. it stood at 109° F. We were soaked through with perspiration, sitting quietly reading and writing in the verandah of the court house. All day a heavy, dark bank of clouds lay along the horizon, out to the south and east. About 3 o'clock the clouds began to spread over the sky. The thermometer fell to 100° F. Suddenly we heard the wind rising and then, from the sandy plains out to the south-east, a dense dust storm swept down upon us, hiding everything from view. The clouds quickly came up, and great jagged forks of lightning seemed to streak right down to the ground. The rain came down in a perfect deluge, but in a few minutes it was all over and we could hear the storm rumbling away in the north-west. The thermometer ran down to 88° F., and for a short time we had a refreshing earth smell. These conditions, however,

did not last long, and soon everything was again moist and sticky. The temperature at 4.30 p.m. was 100° F.; at 6 p.m., 98° F.; and at 9 p.m. it was 88° F. For a few hours after a heavy downpour the creek close to our camp (Fig. 362) was full of water, but it very soon ran dry.

We had attached two or three natives to our staff, representing the Binbinga, Anula and Mara tribes, and on one or two occasions were much interested in slight disturbances in their domestic affairs. One morning our Binbinga boy came to us in a state of great excitement. When he quieted down a little we found out what his trouble was. Another boy had run away with his wife. He evidently expected that we should start off at once and capture the fugitives, and was much disappointed when we told him that we had no authority over them, and suggested that he should consult the owner of the store, who happened to be the employer of the boy who had run away with his wife. A day or two later he secured another wife and appeared to be perfectly happy. Probably he had stolen her from some other blackfellow. Apart from the purely personal feeling of wounded vanity and the infringement of individual rights, there was nothing strictly wrong in these transactions, because in each case the men and women belonged to inter-marrying groups.

One morning a few weeks after this had occurred, we heard a great deal of shrill talking in our camp, where, of course, we had not only our black boys, but their lubras and sundry hangers-on, who profited much by their association with the boys. One of the latter, an Anula native, was the possessor of two wives, but, as their tempers were incompatible and their constant quarrels annoyed him and interfered seriously with his domestic

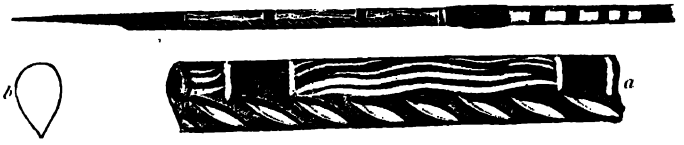


Fig. 360. SPEAR WITH UNCUT BARBS, ANULA TRIBE (p. 485).



Fig. 361. DECORATED SPEAR-HEAD, TJINGILLI TRIBE (p. 485).



Fig. 362. THE CREEK AT BORROLOOLA AFTER A STORM.

comfort, he decided to part with one of them. She, naturally, felt somewhat aggrieved and challenged the more favoured one to a fight, which was taking place when we went out to see what was the matter. The man was seated on the ground, quite unconcerned, while his two wives were belabouring each other's heads with their waddies. We found that he was quietly going through a bag containing his store of personal belongings—ornaments, etc.—and was throwing out such few items as belonged to, or had been given to him, by the discarded wife. After the fight was over the matter was at an end. The rejected lubra went to the women's camp, where she and her children were speedily adopted by another lawful husband who was in want of a wife.

At Borroloola our land trip came to an end, and there was nothing for our two Arunta boys, Purunda and Erlikiliaka, to do; so, after a good rest there, they decided to return to their own country. Their final decision was based on a rather amusing incident that occurred one day when Purunda had gone out to look after the horses. We had sent the latter across the river where there was good green feed. The river, though it was here forty miles from its mouth, is affected by the tide. When first Purunda took the horses over, the tide was low and a slight current was running seawards over the rocky bar. When next he went across, the tide was rising and driving the water in the opposite direction. This was too much for Purunda, who had never heard of a tidal river. He came back to camp in a state of great excitement and anger, and told us that the river was running the wrong way. "No good like that," he said, "him gammon, one day him go one way, and to-day him go another way." He was really angry with it and evidently under the impression that the river was deliberately trying to annoy

him. We tried to explain matters, but it was no use; and after discussing the situation, he and Erlikiliaka decided to return to Charlotte Waters, where, at all events, when there was any water, it did not go up hill one day and down hill the next. A few days later the two boys started off to retrace our tracks across the continent. Each of them had a riding-horse, and they took with them two others on which their belongings and a supply of tucker were packed. In fact they left us with possessions enough to make a black boy happy for the rest of his life. We had also secreted supplies of food at different spots in the bush between Borroloola and the telegraph line, and had arranged for a further supply when once they reached the line, where they would be safe so far as any danger from hostile tribes was concerned. Each of them had a revolver in case of need, and they started away in the best of spirits. The weather was very hot, so they were obliged to travel slowly, but some four months later they reached Charlotte Waters safely and delivered their horses and impedimenta, all in perfectly good order, to our friend Mr. P. M. Byrne, the officer in charge of the station.

Time went on and still there was no news of any boat. We had expected to get away from Borroloola about the end of November, but it was early in December before any news came from Darwin, and then a ketch came up the river bringing a small supply of stores and also the news that no steamer was likely to come for some time. The skipper declined to take passengers—in fact there was no room whatever for them on the little ketch. Added to this, it was the monsoon season, which meant that any amount of time might be spent in beating up north and west against heavy winds and seas. We were simply stranded. Not suspecting any breakdown, we

had sold our horses and wagon long ago, and they had left Borroloola and were far away. Even if we had kept them, it would have been a very risky thing to travel overland at that time of the year. To the south, on the tablelands, there was the practical certainty of drought, and to the north and west, towards Darwin, the probability of heavy floods at any moment. We could do nothing but wait and work on.

Christmas Day, thanks to the kindness of Mr. McLeod, the manager of the store, and Corporal Stott, who represented the law in this remote part, formed a pleasant break in our somewhat monotonous life. We dined with them and had genuine Christmas cheer, including plum-pudding and a solitary bottle of whisky, the only one within a radius of at least three hundred miles. This had been carefully and thoughtfully saved for the occasion, as the general supply in the township had run out long ago. Owing to the temperature and the absence of ladies, it was agreed that coats should be discarded, so, in decidedly light attire, we sat down to the most sumptuous and certainly the most pleasant meal that we had in Borroloola, followed by a quiet smoke and chat in the brilliant moonlight.

When the weather became too hot for much hard work, we spent many hours watching the women playing string games—exactly the same thing as our "cat's cradle" only on a wonderfully elaborate scale. The women themselves got so interested in showing us their games that they played away of their own accord all day long. String games were "all the rage," just as amongst street children tops or marbles or any other game may be the "rage" for a time. Some of the designs were so complicated that they required two lubras to make them, each of the latter using the fingers and toes of both

hands and feet and also her mouth. The accompanying diagrams (Figs. 363, 364) represent stages in the

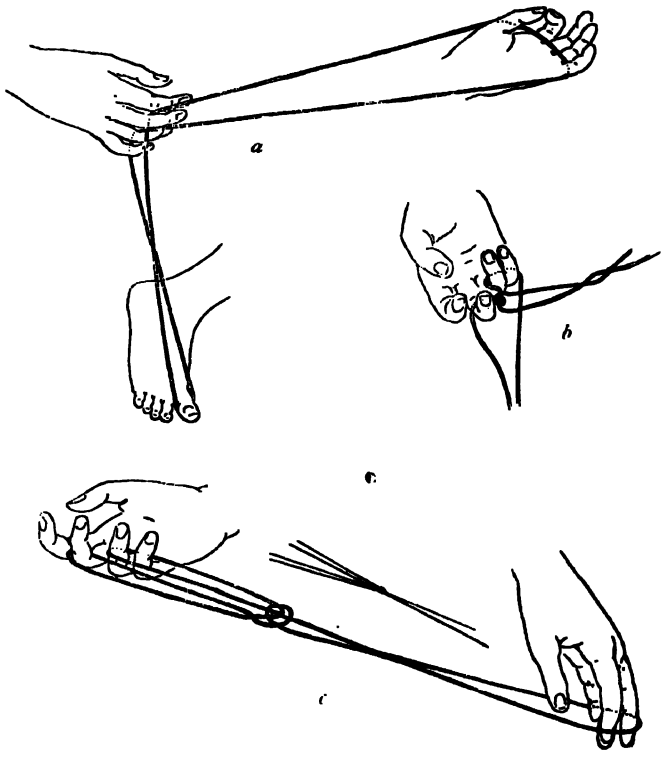


FIG. 363.—MARA STRING GAME. YAM DESIGN.

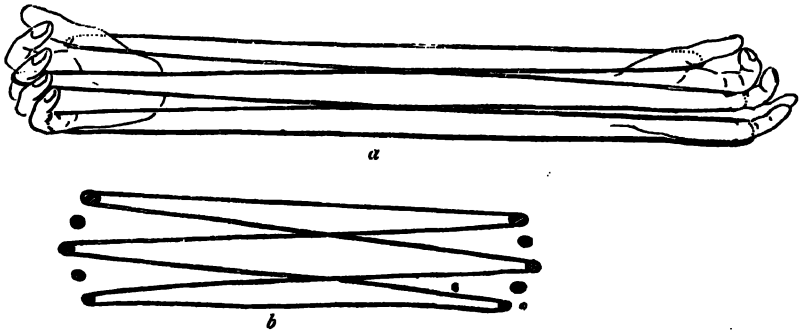


FIG. 364.—MARA STRING GAME. DUGONG DESIGN.

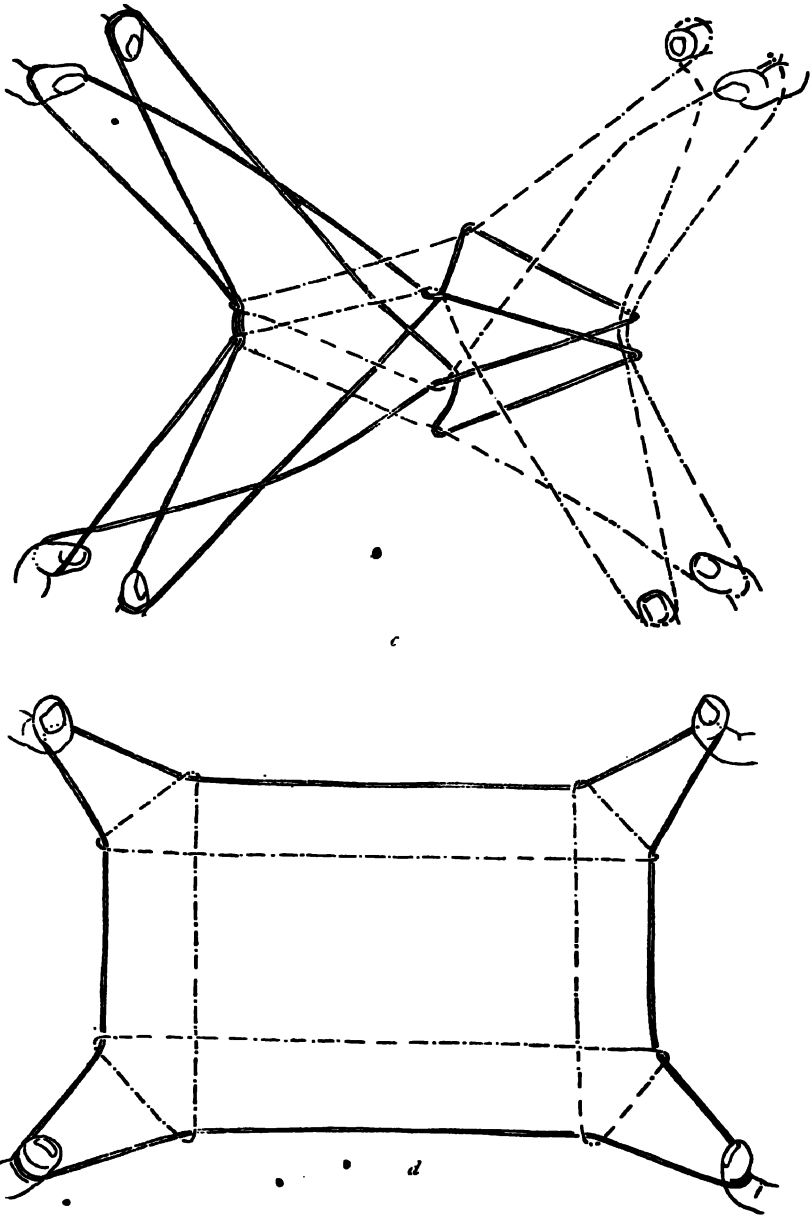


FIG. 364 (*cont.*)—DUGONG DESIGN.

making of a yam and a dugong design. In the former a single string was used, and at one stage a toe and the fingers of both hands were employed. The dugong was more complicated, requiring two strings and four hands. When it was finished the two strings were intertwined in such a way that the outer frame was made of one piece and the inner of the other, and the whole structure was held taut by the women's forefingers.

The old year went and the new year came, but still there was no sign of a steamer. The only excitement that we had for some time was another slight disturbance amongst our native friends. It almost looked as if we had a bad influence on them. The boy who had already discarded one wife was evidently rather fickle, and early in the year eloped with another lady, leaving his wife lamenting. When this was discovered two of his mother's sisters came into the camp of the deserted lubra and howled aloud for some time—which, we learned, was the strictly correct thing for them to do in the circumstances. In a short time they, and the forlorn widow, were quite cheerful, and two days later she was again provided with a husband.

Late in January the natives brought in word that a boat was coming up the river, and that there had been an accident of some kind. It turned out to be another small ketch from Darwin with a welcome supply of stores, as the flour had nearly run out. When the boat came in we found that the captain had his right arm badly injured, and that one of the sailors—a Malagasy boy—had a fractured skull. They told us that on the way down they had put into one of the English Company's Islands, which lie just at the western entrance of the Gulf, in order to obtain a supply of fresh water and fire-wood for cooking purposes. They had been

assisted by natives who were apparently perfectly friendly, and to whom they had given some flour in a bag with injunctions to bring the latter back with some more wood. The captain and crew were all asleep, not suspecting any danger—the former down in the small cabin aft. When the native boat came alongside, one of the crew, a Malagasy boy, leaned over to get the bag when, suddenly, he was hit on the head with a Malay kris, and three or four natives immediately jumped on board. One of them threw a spear down into the cabin which, luckily, did nothing worse than go straight through the captain's arm between the shoulder and the elbow, breaking, or at all events bruising, the bone severely. The captain was helpless, and there were only two members of the crew left—one a black boy and the other a very powerful Macassar boy, who immediately seized an iron bar that fortunately was lying handy, and laid about him to such good purpose that he knocked two of the assailants overboard and frightened the others so much that they dived into the water and swam for the shore, leaving their boat, which was destroyed. But for him the whole crew would have been massacred. It took them two weeks to reach the mouth of the Macarthur, and during that time the captain steered with his left arm, his right being bound to his side. The Macassar boy and the black boy managed the sails and did all the work of the boat, while the Malagasy boy remained unconscious, moaning and groaning the whole time. When they reached Borroloola the captain's arm was so swollen and discoloured that we could do nothing but bind it up carefully and wait. The spear had gone right through, and after the shaft had been sawn off the head end was drawn out. The Malagasy boy was brought into our camp and there he lingered on till the

last day of January. We could do nothing for him, for the kris had driven in a little bit of the bone of his skull and he never regained consciousness. Wrapped in canvas, he was carried out to the bush and buried in the lonely cemetery where there are other nameless graves. No one knew anything about him—not even his full name, nor where he came from. A formal inquest was held, and that was the end.

As one of our party was a magistrate, and as Mr. Amos, the manager of the Macarthur station, was another, advantage was taken of the very rare presence of two such officials at Borroloola to hold one or two courts. They certainly formed a break in our ordinary life, and sometimes their proceedings were not altogether dull or precisely formal. On one occasion the proceedings were briefly as follows:—

Scene: The court house, Borroloola.

Present: Two magistrates, one constable, one native prisoner, three native witnesses, "Charlie," "Peter," "George," an audience consisting of one white man.

The prisoner (there was no bar) was charged with stealing yams or sweet potatoes out of a garden kept by one Price, in company with another native still at large.

The constable stated the case briefly as follows:

"You been steal 'em potato along garden, all same fifteen shilling. Then you been carry 'em away." Calls up first witness.

"Your name Charlie?"

"Yes, me Charlie all right."

"You tell 'em straight fellow, no tell 'em lies. You work along Mr. Price. You work 'em yesterday along garden?"

"Yes me been go yesterday along potato, along Mr. Price."

"You been see 'em anyone track?"

"Yes, me been see 'em that one track" (pointing to the prisoner).

"You savee him track?"

"Yes me plenty savee."

"You been see 'em which way him been dig up potato?"

"Yes me been see 'em, then me been follow up that one track along garden. Then him go outside along little fellow road, then him go along camp."

"You quite sure you plenty savee track?"

"Yes me plenty savee, all right."

Calls up second witness.

"Now Peter, you talk straight along of these gentlemen. You country man along of this boy?" (pointing to prisoner).

"Yes me country man all right."

"You remember another one night, this boy and 'doctor' (the escaped culprit) been sleep along camp?"

"Yes me plenty know."

"Well, what name him been do first time?"

"First time him sleep, then him wake up. Moon along top of sky. Him say you and me go along Price potato. Doctor been first time yabber this. Then two fellow been walk. By and by him come back. Him been bring 'em three fellow bag along of potato. Doctor been carry 'em two fellow bag, him been carry one fellow. Two fellow been sit down and tuck out. Him been first time leave 'em one fellow bag along old man alligator camp. By and by him take 'em two fellow bag along crossing (*i.e.*, the creek). Two fellow been go self along crossing me no been go."

Calls up third witness.

"Now George you yabber straight, no tell 'em lie."

"All right me yabber straight fellow."

"You been go along crossing yesterday?"

"Yes me been go along crossing all right."

"Well, what name you been see?"

"Me been see 'em two fellow track."

"What name him been do?"

"Him been sit down make 'em fire."

"You been see 'em anything along creek?"

"Yes me been see 'em two fellow bag potato. One fellow been bring 'em up, then him been chuck 'em down first time. By and by him been make 'em fire cook 'em."

The witness retired.

Magistrate to the prisoner: "You been hear 'em what black fellow been say?"

"Yes me been hear all right."

"You been steal 'em that one potato?"

"Yes me been steal 'em all right."

"What name, me send you along Port Darwin, or you sit down here?"

"Me sit down here."

Magistrate solemnly pronounces sentence: "No good black fellow steal 'em potato. Suppose 'em black fellow steal 'em, white fellow sulky. You sit down two fellow moon along gaol, work 'em. Suppose you steal 'em more, you sit down big fellow time along Port Darwin." The prisoner was then marched off to the gaol—a log hut close by—where he had three meals and three smokes daily, and did a certain amount of light work such as wood-chopping—not at all an unpleasant life for a native, for a time.

January passed by without any sign of a steamer, and we were beginning to wonder whether the existence of Borroloola had been forgotten. There was really not

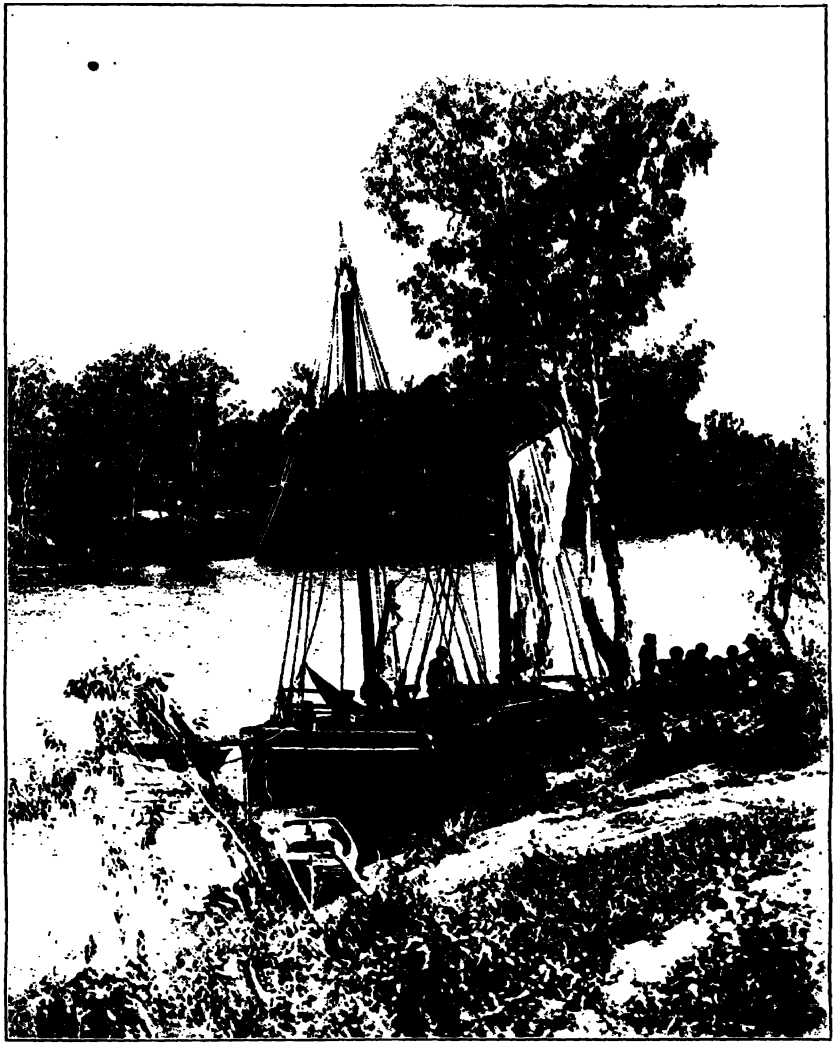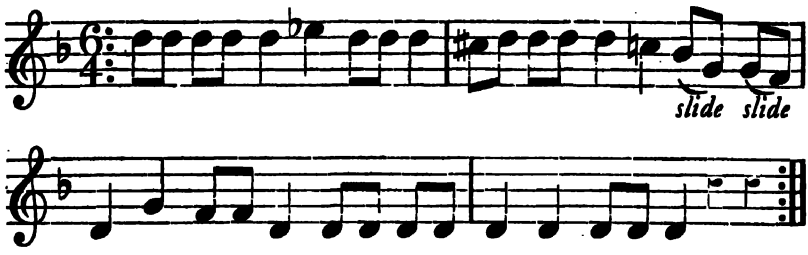


Fig. 365. MACARTHUR RIVER.

very much more that we could do amongst the natives; in fact they were far too much possessed with the tired feeling that comes over every one in the damp, hot climate of the Gulf country during the summer months, to be fit for much work of any kind.
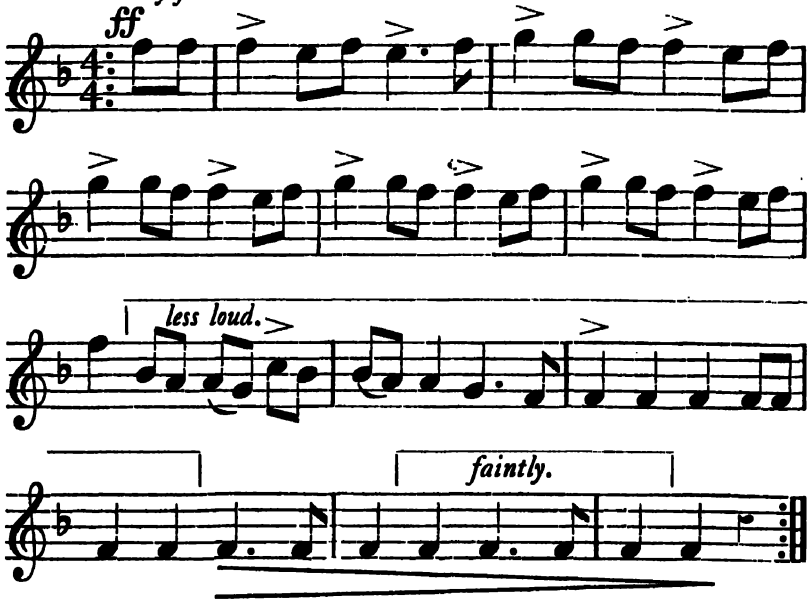
We had just turned into our mosquito tents on the evening of February 8th when we heard the barking of camp dogs and the tramp of feet. Very soon, accompanied by four men armed with rifles, Captain Myles came into our camp and told us that he had been sent by the Queensland Government to bring us away from Borroloola. He had come across from Normanton in a little pilot boat, the *Vigilant*, and with great difficulty had found his way up the Macarthur river to within five miles of our camp (Fig. 365). Fortunately the steamer only drew about five feet, but no boat, except small ketches, had ever been up the river so far before. Captain Myles had heard marvellous tales of the ferocity of the natives, hence his armed escort, and he fully expected to find us in an invalid condition, instead of which he found three ordinary individuals in a particularly good state of health. We were not long in packing up, and at ten o'clock next morning left Borroloola. Two of the three white residents came with us to the steamer—the third remained behind to watch his prisoners and take care of the place generally. All day long the little *Vigilant* steamed slowly on between low banks of Mangrove swamps. It was sunset when we reached the mouth of the river, and there we anchored for the night. At sunrise we were carefully feeling our way across the shallow bar. Once safely over this, we steamed away to the south; the low lying shores were soon only a line on the horizon, and we were out on our homeward journey on the blue waters of the Gulf.

APPENDIX

I. *Medium speed, flowingly.*



II. *Fairly fast.*



The above represent two airs of corrobboree songs noted down by Mr. Percy Grainger from phonograph records. They are indicated as correctly as it is possible to play them on a piano. The intervals are not strictly correct, as they can only be accurately produced by the human voice or a stringed instrument such as the violin.

The same airs are repeated time after time.

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